PRIDE 2025

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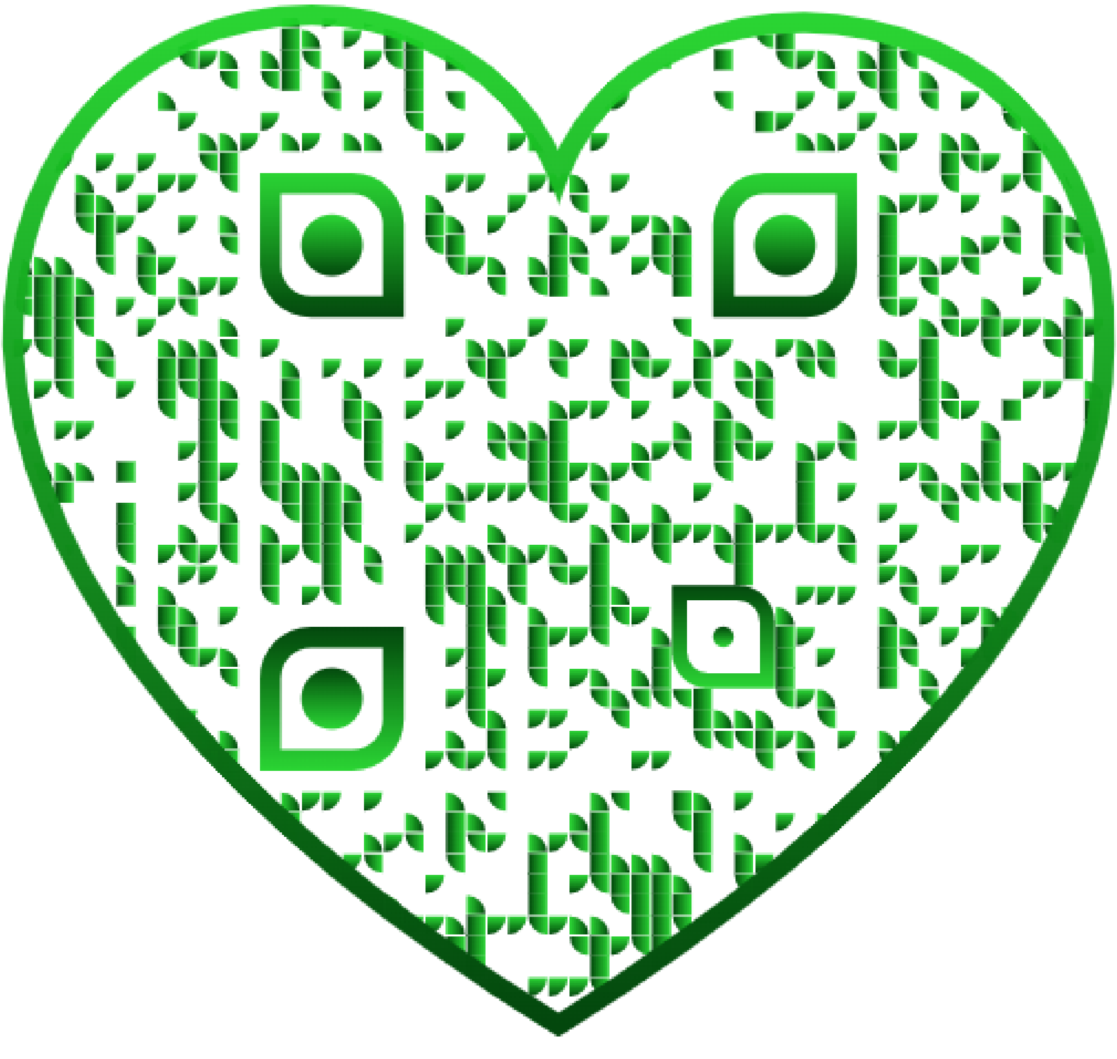
+

BIG FREEDIA'S GOSPEL

27 LGBTQ+ EXECUTIVES LEADING NOW

A FORCE *For Good*

CYNTHIA ERIVO opens up about her queerness, changes in Washington and the next 'Wicked'



GOD ONLY KNOWS WHAT WE'D BE WITHOUT YOU

BRIAN WILSON

1942 – 2025

YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY AT

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JUNE 21, 2025

VOLUME 137

NO. 10

ON THE COVER
Cynthia Erivo photographed by Erica Hernández on April 21 at Milk Studios in Los Angeles.

THIS PAGE
Saint Laurent bodysuit.

TO OUR READERS
Billboard will publish its next issue on July 19. For 24/7 music coverage, go to billboard.com.

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A FORCE FOR GOOD

Whether using her astonishing voice on screen, on her new album or at WorldPride, **Cynthia Erivo** sees no limit to her potential: "If I can do it, then why not try?"

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PRIDE 2025

Executives of the year **Emily** and **Jamie Dryburgh** lead *Billboard*'s list of the industry's LGBTQ+ leaders now; plus, New Orleans bounce queen **Big Freedia** goes gospel.

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Emily (left) and Jamie Dryburgh photographed by Emily Dorio on May 28 at The Fallyn in Nashville.

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Ahead of **The Who**'s final North American shows — 43 years after its first farewell tour — *Billboard* looks back on the British band's long road to goodbye.

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2025 AMERICAN MUSIC AWARDS WINS

THE WEEKND

FAVORITE MALE R&B ARTIST

FAVORITE R&B ALBUM

"Hurry Up Tomorrow"

POST MALONE

FAVORITE MALE COUNTRY ARTIST

FAVORITE COUNTRY SONG

Featuring Morgan Wallen –
"I Had Some Help"

BEYONCE

FAVORITE FEMALE COUNTRY ARTIST

FAVORITE COUNTRY ALBUM

"Cowboy Carter"

SHAKIRA

FAVORITE LATIN SONG

"Soltera"

EMINEM

FAVORITE MALE HIP-HOP ARTIST

FAVORITE HIP-HOP ALBUM

"The Death Of Slim Shady (Coup De Grâce)"

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Our Pride Power Player honoree — Rachel Jacobson — has chosen the Los Angeles LGBT Center for their commitment to celebrating and empowering LGBTQ+ individuals and families by providing community, education, safety, advocacy, and other services.

WARNER MUSIC GROUP

charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 6.21.2025

Sabrina Carpenter Scores Second Hot 100 No. 1

SARAH CARPENTER

BILLBOARD HOT 100

1

"Manchild"
Sabrina Carpenter

LAST WEEK	PEAK POSITION	WEEKS ON CHART
-	1	1

SABRINA CARPENTER hitches a ride to No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 with her new single, "Manchild." The song is her second leader — and first to debut in the top spot. "Please Please Please" spent a week at No. 1 last June in its second week on the chart, rising from the runner-up rank. Notably, Carpenter is the only woman with multiple Hot 100 leaders over that time frame.

Released on Island Records and promoted to radio by Republic, "Manchild" also marks Island's first song to enter atop the Hot 100.

The single arrived June 5, followed a day later by its playfully off-kilter official video in which Carpenter becomes a passenger in an assortment of transports including a grocery cart fused to a motorcycle and a recliner on wheels. (Reflecting the song's title, the men driving are equally quirky, if not more so.)

The track tallied 27.1 million official streams, 14 million radio airplay audience impressions and 20,000 sold in the United States in the week ending June 12, according to Luminate. Its sales include 14,000 on vinyl, featuring the exclusive B-side "Inside of Your Head When You've Just Won an Argument With a Man."

"Manchild," Carpenter's fourth Hot 100 top 10, introduces her next album, *Man's Best Friend*, due Aug. 29. Her prior set, *Short n' Sweet*, arrived Aug. 23, 2024, and, along with "Please Please Please," generated the No. 3-peaking "Espresso" and the No. 2 hit "Taste."

Carpenter co-produced "Manchild" with Jack Antonoff and co-wrote it with him and Amy Allen. The trio also co-wrote "Please Please Please," which Antonoff produced. —**GARY TRUST**

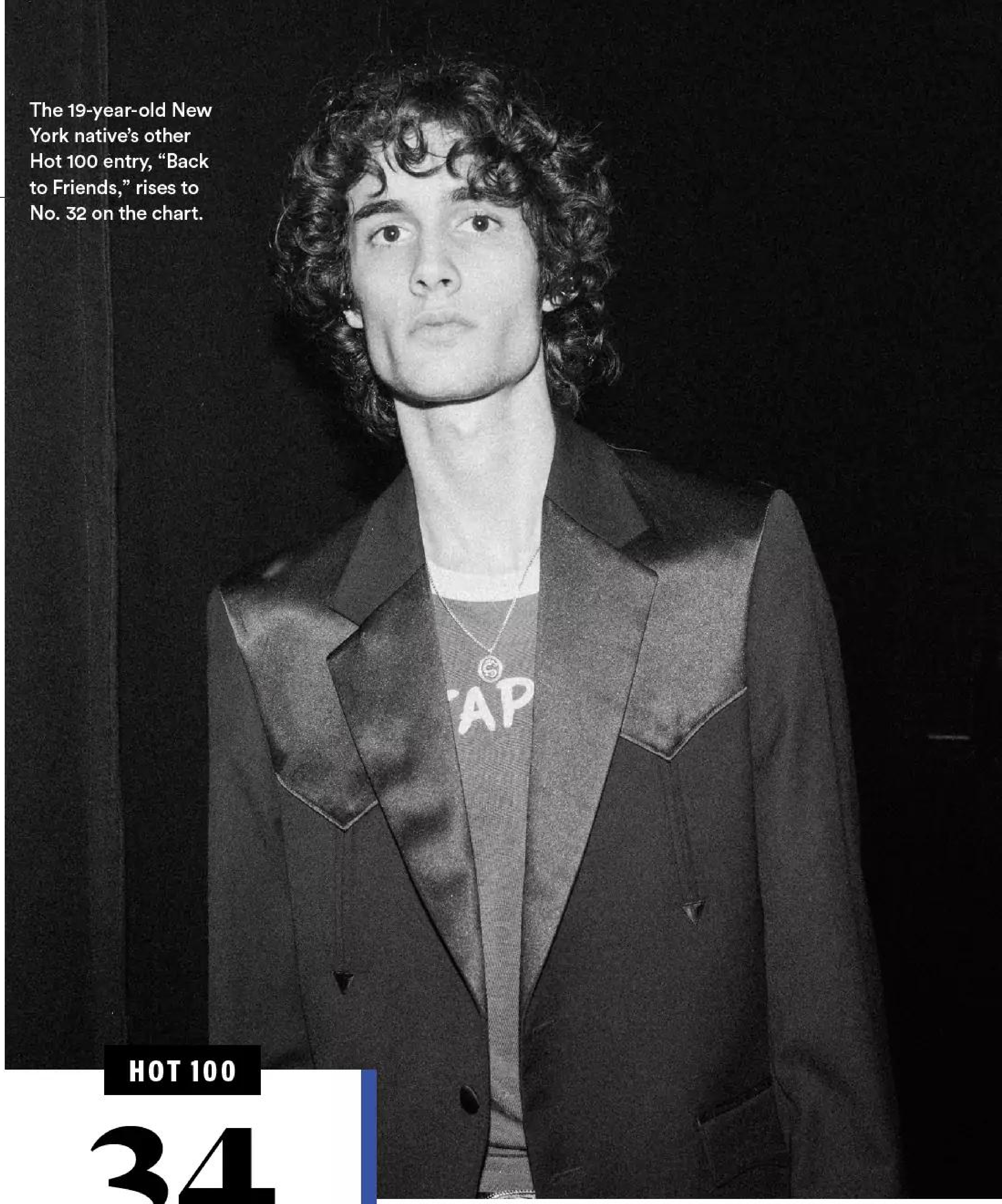
charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 6.21.2025

Hot 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Title PRODUCER (SONGWRITER)	Artist IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
HOT SHOT DEBUT		①	#1 for 1 WEEK **Manchild** J.M.ANTONOFF,S.CARPENTER (S.A.CARPENTER,J.M.ANTONOFF,A.R.ALLEN)	**Sabrina Carpenter** ISLAND/REPUBLIC	1	1
①	①	②	AIR **Ordinary** A.YARON (A.WARREN,A.YARON,C.SHAPIRO,MAGS DUVAL)	**Alex Warren** ATLANTIC	1	18
2	②	3	**What I Want** J.MOI,CHARLIE HANDSOME (M.C.WALLEN,T.MCRAE,J.BYRON,J.K.HINDLIN,CHARLIE HANDSOME,J.REEVES)	**Morgan Wallen Featuring Tate McRae** MERCURY/BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	1	4
3	3	4	**Just In Case** J.MOI,CHARLIE HANDSOME (M.C.WALLEN,A.W.BAK,J.BYRON,J.K.HINDLIN,B.PENDERGRASS, J.P.THOMPSON,CHARLIE HANDSOME,E.K.SMITH)	**Morgan Wallen** MERCURY/BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	2	12
5	4	5	**Luther** SOUNWAVE,J.M.ANTONOFF,ROSELILAH,M-TECH,SCOTT BRIDGEWAY,K.WASHINGTON (K.L.DUCKWORTH,S.I.ROWE,A.BOGGS,S.J.DEW,M.A.SPEARS,J.M.ANTONOFF,R.L.BACHA,M.BERNARD, K.WASHINGTON,R.M.AKERS JR,M.GAYE)	**Kendrick Lamar & SZA** PGLANG/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	1	29
4	5	6	**I'm The Problem** J.MOI,CHARLIE HANDSOME (M.C.WALLEN,G.W.BLOCK,J.MCLAUGHLIN,E.K.SMITH,CHARLIE HANDSOME)	**Morgan Wallen** MERCURY/BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	2	19
6	6	7	SAL **A Bar Song (Tipsy)** S.COOK,N.SASTRY (C.O.CHIBUEZE,S.C.COOK,N.SASTRY,J.JONES,J.A.KENT,M.A.WILLIAMS)	**Shaboozey** AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE/MAGNOLIA MUSIC	1	61
7	7	8	**Die With A Smile** BRUNO MARS,D'MILE,LADY GAGA,ANDREW WATT (BRUNO MARS,S.G.GERMANOTTA,D.EMILE II, J.E.FAUNTLEROY II,A.WOTMAN)	**Lady Gaga & Bruno Mars** STREAMLINE/INTERSCOPE/ATLANTIC/ICLG	1	43
8	8	9	**Lose Control** INFAMOUS,AMMO,J.BUNETTA (J.E.COLEMAN,J.C.BUNETTA,M.RODRIGUEZ-DIAZ,MIKKY EKKO,J.C.DIMSDALE)	**Teddy Swims** SWIMS INT./WARNER	1	95
10	9	10	**Beautiful Things** E.BLAIR (B.BOONE,E.BLAIR,J.L.LARSEN)	**Benson Boone** NIGHT STREET/WARNER	2	72
12	12	11	**Pink Pony Club** D.NIGRO (D.L.NIGRO,K.R.AMSTUTZ)	**Chappell Roan** KRA/AMUSEMENT/ISLAND/REPUBLIC	4	52
9	10	12	**Nokia** ELKAN (A.GRAHAM)	**Drake** OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC/SANTA ANNA	2	17
11	⑪	13	**Anxiety** DOECHII (J.J.M.HICKMON,W.DE BACKER,L.F.BONFA)	**Doechii** TOP DAWG/CAPITOL/ICLG	9	14
⑱	⑭	⑭	**Mutt** L.THOMAS,FAXXONLY,P.L.JOHNSON (L.G.THOMAS III,R.FAIRFAX III,L.A.CAMEJO,P.L.JOHNSON)	**Leon Thomas** EZMNY/MOTOWN/ICLG	13	19
16	15	15	**I Had Some Help** L.BELL,CHARLIE HANDSOME,HOSKINS (A.R.POST,M.C.WALLEN,L.B.BELL,CHARLIE HANDSOME,E.K.SMITH, J.J.HOSKINS,C.P.WALTERS,A.G.GORLEY)	**Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen** MERCURY/BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	1	57
13	⑬	16	**Birds Of A Feather** FINNEAS (B.E.O'CONNELL,F.B.O'CONNELL)	**Billie Eilish** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	2	56
21	20	17	**Espresso** J.BUNETTA (S.A.CARPENTER,J.C.BUNETTA,A.R.ALLEN,S.N.JONES)	**Sabrina Carpenter** ISLAND/REPUBLIC	3	61
24	⑯	18	**Blue Strips** BEKON,S.GHERMAN,T.MEHLENBACHER (J.MURPH,L.J.VELTZ,D.TANNENBAUM,S.A.GHEMAN, T.R.MEHLENBACHER)	**Jessie Murph** COLUMBIA	15	9
⑲	⑱	19	**All The Way** BANDPLAY,CHARLEY COOKS (X.LANDUM,C.N.FORSBERG III,K.O'BRIEN GAINES,B.JOHNSON,K.K.JOHNSON, J.JOHNSON)	**BigXthaPlug Featuring Bailey Zimmerman** BIGXTHAPLUG/ATLANTIC/UNITEDMASTERS	4	10
㉖	㉓	⑳	**Worst Way** D.HUFF (R.GREEN)	**Riley Green** NASHVILLE HARBOR	20	22

Go to the Chart Beat section of billboard.com for complete charts coverage.



The 19-year-old New York native's other Hot 100 entry, "Back to Friends," rises to No. 32 on the chart.

BRYCE GLENN

HOT 100

34

"Undressed"

sombr

How was "Undressed" created?

I made "Undressed" when I was feeling not so good, as I feel when I create my favorite songs. I started by producing some drums, and then I recorded that guitar bassline that you hear throughout the song. From there, I recorded that guitar riff in the intro and post-chorus. When I listened back to that riff, I knew it was something special. The first verse, chorus and second verse came very easily; I wrote the bridge in five minutes. I leaked the song online, and it was the greatest initial response I've ever had from a leak. The song wasn't even finished yet, so we had to scramble to finish.

You're touring throughout 2025, including dates with venue upgrades. What have been your biggest takeaways from life on the road?

It's the most fun life experience an artist can go through. If you're an artist, I urge you to try to tour at one point in your career. I'm so grateful to be playing shows, whether it's a venue upgrade or the smallest room in a city. But the road also has downsides: It can be lonely in a different hotel room in a different bed every night. You can disassociate, but then that hour that you're onstage always feels like the best hour you've had in your life yet — until you do it again the next night.

How does the success of both "Undressed" and "Back to Friends" affect conversations surrounding new music?

There's always a part of having "hits" that puts pressure on you, but I try to block that out. Every time I'm feeling it, I remember why I made those songs. I didn't make them to have hits; I made them because I was feeling something and I needed an escape. You have to remember why you're in it, and that's something that helps me a lot. The music I've made has given me the confidence to do what I want and make what I feel is true to myself — that's what those songs were. I can't say much, but there's an album on the horizon. —JOSH GLICKSMAN

HOT 100 FIRST-TIMERS

Artists who have recently made their initial appearances on the chart

ARTIST	SONG	DEBUT POSITION	DEBUT DATE
Max McNown	"Better Me for You (Brown Eyes)"	98	June 14
Jay Jones	"Hip-Hop" with Lil Wayne & BigXthaPlug	36	June 21

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE
BILLBOARD HOT 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE AND SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS.
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BILLBOARD 200

4

Addison Rae

Addison

The singer-songwriter's first full-length studio album arrives with 49,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the week ending June 12, according to Luminate. Meanwhile, the set's "Fame Is a Gun" shoots 94-73 on the Billboard Hot 100.

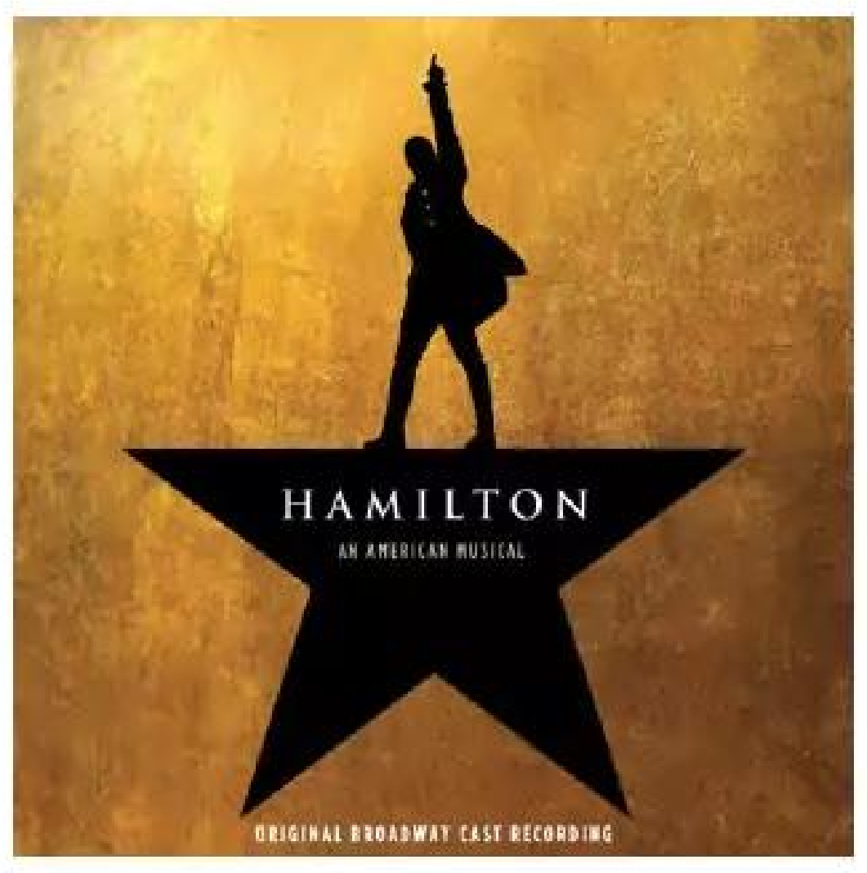
6

My Chemical Romance

Three Cheers for Sweet Revenge

The 2004 set reaches the top 10 for the first time following a deluxe reissue with refreshed audio and bonus tracks. It tops multiple charts, including Top Rock & Alternative Albums and Vinyl Albums.

15



Original Broadway Cast Recording

Hamilton: An American Musical

To celebrate the show's 10th anniversary, the original Broadway cast reunited for a performance at the June 8 Tony Awards, helping prompt the set's 31-15 surge — its highest rank since November 2020.

2

Lil Wayne

Tha Carter VI

Lil Wayne logs his 13th top 10-charting album on the Billboard 200 as *Tha Carter VI* debuts at No. 2 with 108,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States in the week ending June 12, according to Luminate. Of that sum, streaming-equivalent album units account for 73,000 (equaling 97.1 million on-demand official streams of the set's songs; it debuts at No. 2 on Top Streaming Albums), album sales for 34,000 (it debuts at No. 3 on Top Album Sales) and track-equivalent album units for 1,000.

Lil Wayne's long-running *Tha Carter* series launched in 2004 with the release of its first installment, which debuted and peaked at No. 5 on the July 17, 2004-dated Billboard 200. He followed up with *Tha Carter II* (No. 2, 2005), *Tha Carter III* (No. 1 for three weeks, 2008), *Tha Carter IV* (No. 1 for two weeks, 2011), *Tha Carter V* (No. 1 for one week, 2018) and now *Tha Carter VI*.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

Billboard 200

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	**#1 for 4 WEEKS** **Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	I'm The Problem	1	4
HOT SHOT DEBUT		②	**Lil Wayne** YOUNG MONEY/REPUBLIC	Tha Carter VI	2	1
NEW		③	**ENHYPEN** BELIFT LAB/GEFFEN/ICLG	Desire : Unleash	3	1
NEW		④	**Addison Rae** AS LONG AS I'M DANCING/COLUMBIA	Addison	4	1
②	3	5	**SZA** TOP DAWG/RCA	SOS	1	131
RE-ENTRY		⑥	**My Chemical Romance** REPRISE/WARNER	Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge	6	116
6	8	⑦	**Sabrina Carpenter** ISLAND/REPUBLIC	Short n' Sweet	1	42
4	6	8	**Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	One Thing At A Time	1	119
NEW		⑨	**Turnstile** ROADRUNNER/AG	Never Enough	9	1
③	7	10	**Kendrick Lamar** PGLANG/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	GNX	1	29
7	9	11	**PARTYNEXTDOOR & Drake** OVO SOUND/REPUBLIC/SANTA ANNA	$ome $exy $ongs 4 U	1	17
8	10	12	**Bad Bunny** RIMAS	Debi Tirar Mas Fotos	1	23
10	11	⑬	**Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC	Dangerous: The Double Album	1	231
9	13	⑭	**Billie Eilish** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	Hit Me Hard And Soft	2	56
36	㉛	⑮	**Original Broadway Cast** HAMILTON UPTOWN/ATLANTIC/AG	Hamilton: An American Musical	2	507
12	14	16	**Shaboozey** AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE	Where I've Been, Isn't Where I'm Going	5	54
11	12	17	**Fuerza Regida** STREET MOB/RANCHO HUMILDE/SONY MUSIC LATIN	111XPANTIA	2	6
15	16	⑱	**Chappell Roan** KRA/AMUSEMENT/ISLAND/REPUBLIC	The Rise And Fall Of A Midwest Princess	2	64
⑬	15	19	**Alex Warren** ATLANTIC/AG	You'll Be Alright, Kid (Chapter 1)	13	29
17	19	20	**The Weeknd** XO/REPUBLIC	Hurry Up Tomorrow	1	19

SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD 200: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2025 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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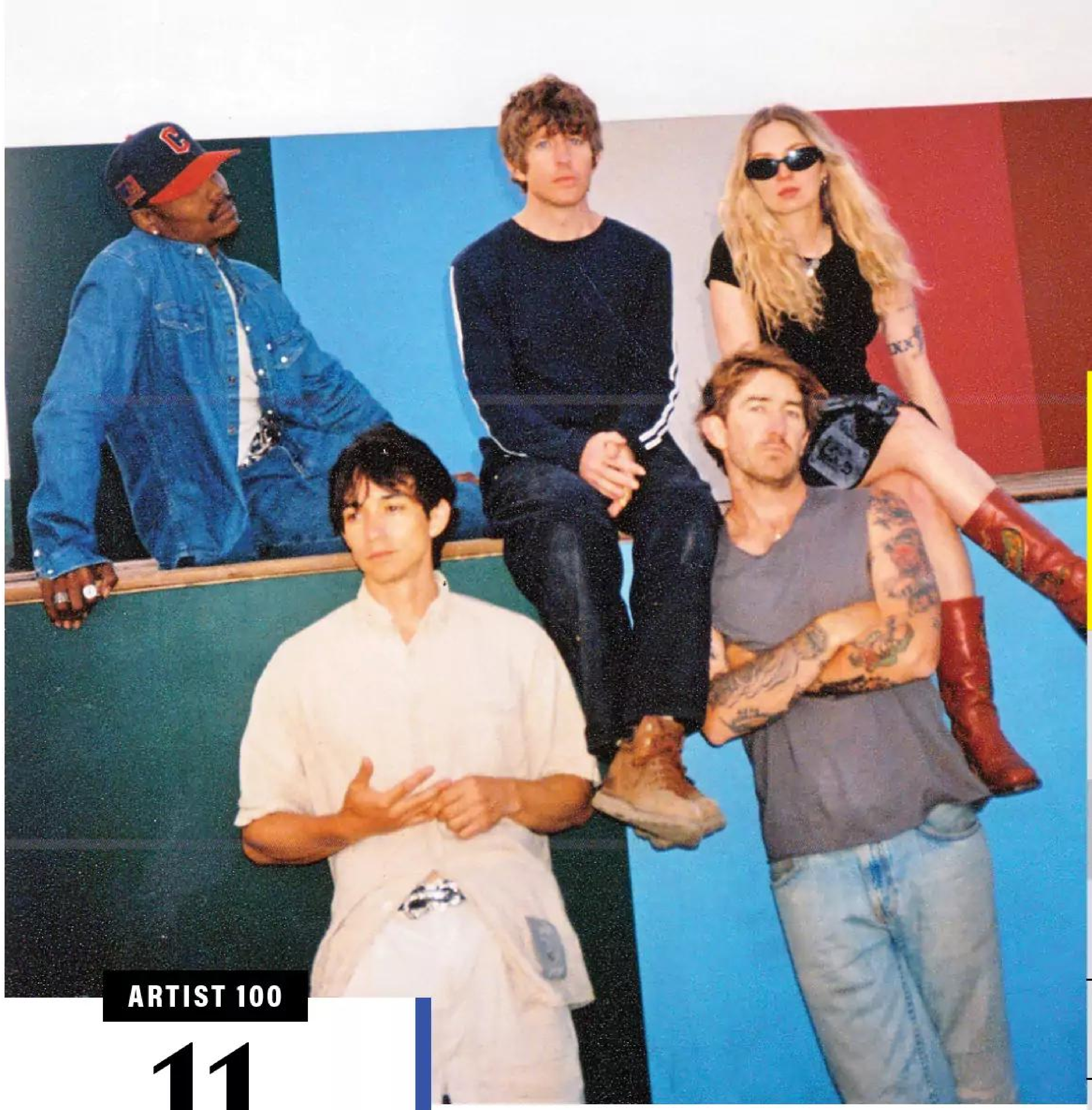

ARTIST 100

11

Turnstile

WEEKS ON CHART

2

The band, which formed in Baltimore in 2010, earns its first No. 1 on Top Hard Rock Albums and its first top 10 on the Billboard 200 (No. 9) as *Never Enough* starts with 38,000 equivalent album units earned in the United States June 6-12, according to Luminate. —KEVIN RUTHERFORD

NO. **31**

The Beach Boys' Brian Wilson Celebrated

The Beach Boys reenter the Artist 100 following the death of band co-founder Brian Wilson at 82 years old on June 11. In the week ending June 12 in the United States, the act's catalog surged 184% to 31,000 equivalent album units earned. On the Billboard 200, *Sounds of Summer: The Very Best of The Beach Boys*, released in 2003, jumps 180-52 (16,000 units, up 71%) and 1966's seminal *Pet Sounds* returns at No. 136 (11,000, up 1,335%). The latter's "Wouldn't It Be Nice" was the group's most streamed song of the week (2.6 million official streams, up 78%). —KEITH CAULFIELD

NO. **68**

Mariah's Milestone

Mariah Carey achieves her landmark 50th career hit on the Billboard Hot 100 as her new single, "Type Dangerous," debuts at No. 95. Released June 6, it starts with 2.5 million official streams, 14.7 million in radio airplay audience and 5,000 sold in the United States through June 12. The track, which Carey co-wrote and co-produced, previews her 16th studio album and first since 2018's *Caution*. Among the single's airplay chart debuts, it launches at No. 7 on R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay, the highest entrance since Whitney Houston's "Exhale (Shoop Shoop)" began at No. 6 in November 1995. —GARY TRUST

Artist 100

2 WKS. AGO	LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist	IMPRINT/LABEL	PEAK POS.	WKS. ON CHART
1	1	1	**#1 for 23 WEEKS** **Morgan Wallen**	BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	1	327
RE-ENTRY		②	**ENHYPEN**	BELIFT LAB/GEFFEN/ICLG	2	68
-	(97)	③	**Lil Wayne**	YOUNG MONEY/REPUBLIC	1	56
2	3	4	**Kendrick Lamar**	PGLANG/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	1	493
5	9	⑤	**Sabrina Carpenter**	ISLAND/REPUBLIC	1	80
RE-ENTRY		⑥	**My Chemical Romance**	REPRISE/WARNER	6	11
3	6	7	**SZA**	TOP DAWG/RCA	1	302
6	11	8	**The Weeknd**	XO/REPUBLIC	1	518
14	②	9	**Taylor Swift**	REPUBLIC	1	568
4	8	10	**Benson Boone**	NIGHT STREET/WARNER	4	73
RE-ENTRY		⑪	**Turnstile**	ROADRUNNER/3EE	11	2
RE-ENTRY		⑫	**Addison Rae**	AS LONG AS I'M DANCING/COLUMBIA	12	3
⑧	10	13	**Alex Warren**	ATLANTIC/AG	8	23
7	7	14	**Billie Eilish**	DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG	1	347
11	13	15	**Luke Combs**	RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN	1	432
10	14	16	**Jelly Roll**	BAILEE & BUDDY/STONEY CREEK/BMG/REPUBLIC	1	152
17	17	17	**Shaboozey**	AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE	8	61
12	15	18	**Chappell Roan**	KRA/AMUSEMENT/ISLAND/REPUBLIC	1	61
20	⑫	19	**Tate McRae**	RCA	1	140
13	16	20	**Teddy Swims**	SWIMS INT./WARNER	3	92

TURNSTILE: ALEXIS GROSS. BEACH BOYS: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. CAREY: ETHAN JAMES GREEN.

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

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NO.
7

The Doobie Brothers Return

The Doobie Brothers' 16th studio album, *Walk This Road*, debuts at No. 7 on Top Album Sales, garnering the veteran band its first top 10 on the 34-year-old chart. The set sold a little more than 12,000 copies in the United States in the week ending June 12, according to Luminate.

Walk This Road also debuts on Indie Store Album Sales, Vinyl Albums (No. 13 on each), Top Rock Albums (No. 16) and the Billboard 200 (No. 76). On the latter-most list, the project marks the 17th charted release for the group and first since 2014. The album's first week was capped with the June 12 induction of the group's Tom Johnston, Michael McDonald and Patrick Simmons into the Songwriters Hall of Fame.

Walk This Road includes "Learn To Let Go," which peaked at No. 23 on the Adult Contemporary airplay chart in May.

—KEITH CAULFIELD

Top Album Sales

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	WKS. ON CHART
HOT SHOT DEBUT	①	**#1 for 1 WEEK** **ENHYPEN** BELIFT LAB/GEFFEN/ICLG	**Desire : Unleash**	1
RE-ENTRY	②	**My Chemical Romance** REPRISE/WARNER	**Three Cheers For Sweet Revenge**	87
NEW	③	**Lil Wayne** YOUNG MONEY/REPUBLIC	**Tha Carter VI**	1
NEW	④	**Turnstile** ROADRUNNER/AG	**Never Enough**	1
NEW	⑤	**Addison Rae** AS LONG AS I'M DANCING/COLUMBIA	**Addison**	1
①	6	**SEVENTEEN** PLEDIS/GEFFEN/ICLG	**Happy Burstday**	2
NEW	⑦	**The Doobie Brothers** DOOBIE DOOBIE DOO/RHINO	**Walk This Road**	1
NEW	⑧	**Volbeat** VERTIGO/REPUBLIC	**God Of Angels Trust**	1
3	9	**Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC	**I'm The Problem**	4
NEW	⑩	**MARINA** QUEENIE/BMG	**Princess Of Power**	1

NO.
3

Lost Sinatra Arrangements Finds Top Five

Seth MacFarlane's *Lush Life: The Lost Sinatra Arrangements* debuts at No. 3 on Traditional Jazz Albums, scoring the entertainer his sixth consecutive top five-charting set on the list. It was also the top-selling jazz album in the United States in the week ending June 12, according to Luminate.

The project consists of new MacFarlane recordings of never-released material arranged for the late Frank Sinatra. His relationship with the Sinatra family began in 2006, when Frank Sinatra Jr. guest-starred on an episode of MacFarlane's *Family Guy* TV show. For this album, Frank Sr.'s daughter Tina Sinatra approached MacFarlane with the opportunity to dig into 1,200 archival boxes of unrecorded sheet music arranged specifically for her father.

"If you're an aficionado of this kind of music," MacFarlane says, "it's like being a Lennon-McCartney fan and finding something that was written in like 1969 that was just never played... You hear it and it's like, 'My God.' "

—KATIE ATKINSON AND KEITH CAULFIELD

Traditional Jazz Albums

LAST WEEK	THIS WEEK	Artist IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL	Title	WKS. ON CHART
①	①	**#1 for 54 WEEKS** **Laufey** LAUFEY/AWAL	**Bewitched**	92
2	2	**Frank Sinatra** FRANK SINATRA ENTERPRISES/CAPITOL/UME	**Ultimate Sinatra**	357
NEW	③	**Seth MacFarlane** FUZZY DOOR/VERVE/REPUBLIC/VLG	**Lush Life: The Lost Sinatra Arrangements**	1
③	④	**Laufey** LAUFEY/AWAL	**Everything I Know About Love**	91
4	5	**Michael Buble** REPRISE/WARNER	**The Best Of Buble**	37
RE-ENTRY	⑥	**Nat King Cole** CAPITOL/UME	**The Very Best Of Nat King Cole**	124
7	⑦	**Miles Davis** COLUMBIA/LEGACY	**Kind Of Blue**	277
8	8	**Frank Sinatra** FRANK SINATRA ENTERPRISES/CAPITOL/UME	**Nothing But The Best**	234
⑨	9	**Laufey** LAUFEY/AWAL	**Typical Of Me (EP)**	77
10	⑩	**Stan Getz And Joao Gilberto Featuring Antonio Carlos Jobim** VERVE/UME	**Getz/Gilberto**	214

DOOBIE BROTHERS: CLAY PATRICK MCBRIDE. MACFARLANE: PAMELA LITTKY.

SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

TOP ALBUM SALES: THE WEEK'S TOP-SELLING ALBUMS ACROSS ALL GENRES, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. TRADITIONAL JAZZ ALBUMS: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR TRADITIONAL JAZZ ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2025 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

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**2025 INSPIRING AND UPLIFTING NEW MUSIC
CHRISTIAN HIP HOP / R&B/DANCE
A GOOD COMBINATION OF GOSPEL, DANCE AND POP MUSIC WHICH UNIQUELY BLENDED.**

Shekinah Grace Moyes has been the vocalist and songwriter of Angel Gospel Music since 2021. Selected as an opera singer, dancer, and actress at a young age, Shekinah has received professional training and education. She was selected as one of the Top three Campus Singers in her college and one of the Top ten regional beauty pageants in Miss Global International. She is always practicing her songwriting, singing in different languages and genres as well as dancing on different occasions. In addition, She has been in Cable TV and Radio stations across the USA and Canada since 2015. Now her new album "Made to Shine" is out soon with a few music videos such as Righteous Love and Made to Shine, etc. Shekinah is dedicated to using her God- Given talents to explore the music world with the passion to bring the Gospel into the world.

This new album "Made to Shine" is a good combination of gospel, dance, and pop music and it is a unique product added to the Christian pop music category.

SHEKINAH GRACE MOYES

from Angel Gospel Music

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Coldplay at Goyang Stadium in South Korea on April 16.

COLDPLAY IS STILL HEATING UP

The band ties for the most months at No. 1, fueled by its *Music of the Spheres* tour

COLDPLAY WAS BACK ON THE ROAD in April, extending its reach to Hong Kong and South Korea. According to figures reported to Billboard Boxscore, the band is No. 1 on the monthly Top Tours chart once again, with $67.4 million grossed and 502,000 tickets sold.

Coldplay has been one of the most dominant acts on the Boxscore charts since its *Music of the Spheres* world tour kicked off in 2022: Its seven months atop the ranking tie Bad Bunny and Elton John for the most at No. 1 since the chart's launch in 2019.

The Top Tours chart has unsurprisingly become closely aligned with the group's touring schedule: Coldplay's last run of shows was in January, and it subsequently earned its sixth monthly victory. Prior to that, the band had dates in November, fueling its fifth monthly win. It played only one show in May, but a busier summer schedule is sure to make Coldplay prohibitive competition for the top slot over the next several months.

Elsewhere on the 30-position chart, tour kickoffs for Beyoncé, Lady Gaga and SZA help make April a banner month for women on tour. They are three of 10 women on the Top Tours chart for April, up from seven in March, six in February and one in January. The 33% representation in April represents the highest for women on a Top Tours chart in its 58 editions.

—ERIC FRANKENBERG

Top Tours

	Artist	Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Coldplay**	$67.4M	502K	10
2	**Kendrick Lamar & SZA**	$43.2M	180K	4
3	**Stray Kids**	$35M	313K	6
4	**Usher**	$30.8M	209K	14
5	**Julion Alvarez**	$30M	132K	3
6	**Dead & Company**	$22.7M	99.8K	6
7	**Shakira**	$21.7M	205K	5
8	**Eagles**	$18.6M	65.6K	4
9	**Metallica**	$18.5M	138K	3
10	**Lady Gaga**	$15.5M	118K	2

Top Boxscores

	Artist(s) VENUE DATE	Gross TICKET PRICES	Total Attendance NO. OF SHOWS	Promoter(s)
1	**Coldplay** GOYANG STADIUM, GOYANG, SOUTH KOREA APRIL 16, 18-19, 22, 24-25	**$34.4M** 318K	**318K** 6	Live Nation
2	**Coldplay** KAI TAK STADIUM, HONG KONG APRIL 8-9, 11-12	**$32.9M** 184K	**184K** 4	Live Nation
3	**Julion Alvarez** SOFI STADIUM, INGLEWOOD, CALIF. APRIL 17-19	**$30M** 132K	**132K** 3	Cárdenas Marketing Network
4	**Pa'l Norte** PARQUE FUNDIDORA, MONTERREY, MEXICO APRIL 4-6	**$21.3M** 197K	**197K** 3	OCESA
5	**Usher** O2 ARENA, LONDON APRIL 1-2, 5-6, 8-9, 11	**$18.1M** 114K	**114K** 7	Live Nation
6	**Lady Gaga** ESTADIO GNP SEGUROS, MEXICO CITY APRIL 26-27	**$15.5M** 118K	**118K** 2	Live Nation, OCESA
7	**Stray Kids** ESTADIO GNP SEGUROS, MEXICO CITY APRIL 12-13	**$14.4M** 110K	**110K** 2	Live Nation, OCESA
8	**Shakira** ESTADIO NACIONAL, SANTIAGO, CHILE APRIL 4-5, 7	**$14.2M** 132K	**132K** 3	Fenix Entertainment
9	**Kendrick Lamar & SZA** AT&T STADIUM, ARLINGTON, TEXAS APRIL 26	**$12.2M** 49.6K	**49.6K** 1	Live Nation
10	**Olivia Rodrigo** ESTADIO GNP SEGUROS, MEXICO CITY APRIL 2-3	**$12.1M** 114K	**114K** 2	OCESA

ANNA LEE

Top Venues

15,001 OR MORE CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Sphere** LAS VEGAS	$41.3M	165K	10
2	**O2 Arena** LONDON	$32M	252K	21
3	**Barclays Center** BROOKLYN	$12.7M	70.7K	6
4	**Ziggo Dome** AMSTERDAM	$11.1M	82.4K	6
5	**Madison Square Garden** NEW YORK	$10.8M	73.1K	6
6	**Qudos Bank Arena** SYDNEY	$7.3M	55.4K	5
7	**Arena Ciudad de Mexico** MEXICO CITY	$7.2M	49.2K	3
8	**T-Mobile Arena** LAS VEGAS	$6.9M	42.5K	3
9	**Accor Arena** PARIS	$6.4M	58.3K	4
10	**Movistar Arena** SANTIAGO, CHILE	$6.3M	85K	9

SZA and Kendrick Lamar

Stray Kids

SZA: DAVID BUONO/ICON SPORTSWIRE/GETTY IMAGES. STRAY KIDS: SONJA FLEMMING/CBS/GETTY IMAGES.

10,001-15,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**OVO Hydro** GLASGOW	$9.6M	122K	16
2	**Moody Center** AUSTIN	$7.2M	54.8K	5
3	**Barclays Arena** HAMBURG, GERMANY	$4.2M	97.2K	17
4	**Hallenstadion** ZURICH	$3.3M	25.7K	3
5	**3Arena** DUBLIN	$3.2M	34.6K	5
6	**Spark Arena** AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND	$2.3M	23.7K	2
7	**Brisbane Entertainment Centre** BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA	$2.1M	18.5K	2
8	**CFG Bank Arena** BALTIMORE	$2M	17.3K	2
9	**Utilita Arena** NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND	$2M	26.7K	7
10	**Dickies Arena** FORT WORTH, TEXAS	$2M	19.3K	2

5,001-10,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Radio City Music Hall** NEW YORK	$10.8M	80.6K	17
2	**Red Rocks Amphitheatre** MORRISON, COLO.	$9.2M	138K	18
3	**Auditorio Nacional** MEXICO CITY	$4.5M	66.1K	7
4	**Wintrust Arena** CHICAGO	$2.4M	21.4K	4
5	**Mohegan Sun Arena** UNCASVILLE, CONN.	$2.3M	33.3K	7
6	**The Theater at Madison Square Garden** NEW YORK	$2.1M	27.8K	8
7	**Bill Graham Civic Auditorium** SAN FRANCISCO	$2.1M	20.5K	3
8	**WaMu Theater** SEATTLE	$2.1M	36.7K	6
9	**Place Bell** LAVAL, QUEBEC	$2.1M	38.4K	8
10	**The Anthem** WASHINGTON, D.C.	$2M	34.9K	8

2,501-5,000 CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Broward Center for the Performing Arts, Au-Rene Theater** FORT LAUDERDALE, FLA.	$4.4M	39.8K	21
2	**The Mission Ballroom** DENVER	$3.1M	63.3K	21
3	**Fox Theatre** ATLANTA	$2.9M	40.2K	12
4	**Beacon Theatre** NEW YORK	$2.8M	35.4K	14
5	**Chicago Theatre** CHICAGO	$2.6M	44.5K	14
6	**The Pinnacle** NASHVILLE	$2.6M	31.6K	12
7	**Altria Theater** RICHMOND, VA.	$2.5M	34.8K	14
8	**OLG Stage at Fallsview Casino Resort** NIAGARA FALLS, ONTARIO	$2.4M	42.4K	9
9	**Providence Performing Arts Center** PROVIDENCE, R.I.	$1.8M	33.8K	14
10	**Teatro Metropolitan** MEXICO CITY	$1.8M	27.6K	10

2,500 OR LESS CAPACITY

	Venue LOCATION	Total Gross	Total Attendance	No. Of Shows
1	**Teatro Telcel** MEXICO CITY	$3.6M	41.5K	30
2	**Barbara B. Mann Performing Arts Hall** FORT MYERS, FLA.	$3.4M	38.1K	25
3	**DeVos Performance Hall** GRAND RAPIDS, MICH.	$3.1M	43K	23
4	**Encore Theater at Wynn Las Vegas** LAS VEGAS	$2.3M	13K	10
5	**Olympia Theatre** DUBLIN	$2.1M	40.9K	29
6	**Metronom Theater** OBERHAUSEN, GERMANY	$1.7M	26.3K	24
7	**Mtelus** MONTREAL	$1.2M	37.8K	22
8	**The Bomb Factory** DALLAS	$1.2M	24.2K	11
9	**Warfield Theatre** SAN FRANCISCO	$1.2M	22.8K	13
10	**Paramount Theatre** DENVER	$1.1M	8.6K	6

2025

billboard

GRAMMY® FIRST LOOK

On July 19, *Billboard* will publish a GRAMMY First Look special feature showcasing the artists, producers and other creative professionals whose music was released during the eligibility period of Aug. 31, 2024, to Aug. 30, 2025. The issue will look at the early contenders for the **68th Annual GRAMMY Awards®** in the categories of Record Of The Year, Song Of The Year, Album Of The Year and Best New Artist.

7/16: ONLINE ENTRY PROCESS OPENS
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ISSUE DATE 7/19
AD CLOSE 7/8
MATERIALS DUE 7/10

GRAMMY AWARDS®

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PG. 22 NEW LAWS TARGET TICKET TOUTS
PG. 23 BELIEVE EYES AMERICA
PG. 24 MEET VENU'S NEW BACKYARDS

MUSIC AND MONEY

Why Artists Are Turning To Fans To Help Pay For Health Care

With inconsistent income and sky-high medical bills, musicians in need of health care who can't tour are increasingly crowdfunding their bills

BY STEVE KNOPPER // ILLUSTRATION BY JUANJO GASULL

JON DEE GRAHAM, the Austin guitarist and songwriter who played in the beloved local punk band True Believers, slipped and fell in 2021, and doctors apparently did not notice a crack in his spine. In early 2024, he had spinal surgery, and a six-month recovery period meant he could not make money from playing gigs. But the procedure didn't take, and in April, he had another surgery, then developed an infection. Today, Graham, 66, lays in bed for hours every day, taking antibiotics every 12 hours that cause nausea and chills.

"We got a call from the IV company: 'We need up-front payment in the thousands before we're able to deliver the medication,' " says William Harries Graham, Jon Dee's son, an architect and singer-songwriter who is overseeing his care.

Jon Dee has Medicare, but there are crucial coverage gaps — because the hospital discharged him, according to William, insurance won't reimburse medication and other portions of his home care. So the family turned to the most reliable backup plan available to veteran, well-known musicians: fans. Jon Dee is also a painter, and William has been offering his artwork, comics and music through a zine-like Bear Cave Dispatch in exchange for online donations. It's working — for now. "We were able to cover those initial medical expenses," he says.

The guitarist's story remains bleak — sepsis recently set in — but it speaks to the blessing-and-curse health-care reality that working musicians must endure as they age. As gig-economy workers whose incomes fluctuate across decades, independent artists often find themselves with few resources for medical costs beyond those covered by the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Medicare or spouses' employer plans. And if medical issues prevent touring, artists often have zero income. But musicians such as Jon Dee and rockers Matthew Sweet and Jesse Malin, as well as the late David Johansen and Gang of Four bassist Dave Allen, have recently tapped into loyal, generous fan bases through crowd-sourcing sites like GoFundMe and other grassroots fundraising.

At recent concerts, Gang of Four founding drummer Hugo Burnham has returned to the stage post-encore to request that fans buy merchandise to offset costs for Allen's family. (Allen died at his home in Portland, Ore., in April at 69 after a long struggle with dementia.) "It's no secret the cost of medical care in the U.S. is an obscenity," says

Exceleration Music agreed to acquire U.K. indie label **Cooking Vinyl**.

Goldman Sachs lowered its global growth expectations for the music industry for the next five years.

MCA laid off nearly 20 employees across multiple departments.

HarbourView Equity Partners raised another $500 million through the sale of a private asset-backed securitization to insurance vehicles managed by investment firm **KKR**.

Burnham, 69, who fractured a bone in his leg during the tour but is covered through his job as a college professor. "Had he lived anywhere else, there might not have been this terrible burden on the family. We all know the stories of people who have had to rely on raising money based on the kindness of strangers — and it's not just musicians."

Outside of the U.S. health-care system, musicians struggling with health-care costs can tap into multiple resources — but they rarely come close to providing all the costs needed for severe, long-term health issues. After Chappell Roan demanded "a livable wage and health care" for artists during her acceptance speech at the 2025 Grammy Awards, music-business experts pointed out that musicians signed to major labels could access health-insurance plans provided by the SAG-AFTRA union for premiums comparable to the ACA.

> "We all know the stories of people who have had to rely on raising money based on the kindness of strangers — and it's not just musicians."
>
> —HUGO BURNHAM, GANG OF FOUR

In addition, Sweet Relief provides grants for artists and others in the music industry through fundraising concerts, donations and other resources. The 31-year-old nonprofit is a "stopgap," according to executive director Aric Steinberg. In 2023, Sweet Relief helped Malin set up an online fundraiser when the veteran punk frontman suffered a paralyzing stroke in his back. "It's unfortunate we have to exist," Steinberg says. "Sadly, we're busier than ever."

MusiCares, a 35-year-old affiliate of the Recording Academy, raises funds through high-profile events like its Grammy Week Person of the Year benefit, which has recently honored the Grateful Dead, Motown Records' Berry Gordy Jr. and Smokey Robinson, Joni Mitchell and Aerosmith. It has provided nearly $120 million in health-care assistance to musicians and music-business workers over time, including roughly $10 million overall to 9,000 people during the past year. "It is not unlimited support," says Theresa Wolters, MusiCares' interim executive director and vp for health and human services. "However, it is very, very substantial."

These limits were evident to William, who says he has reached out to MusiCares on Jon Dee's behalf for health-care funding with "no result." Russell Carter, Sweet's longtime manager, adds that MusiCares contributed funds for some early medical costs, but the charity has been "just one piece in the puzzle of solving his financial woes." (A MusiCares representative says the charity can't comment on artists it works with. Wolters adds: "We work within the realities of our nonprofit model and our commitment to equitable support across the community. In these instances, MusiCares is one part of the solution.")

Sweet, 60, suffered a stroke last October while touring in Toronto. After leaving an intensive-care stroke unit in a Canadian hospital, he returned to his hometown of Omaha, Neb., and has received treatment in a rehabilitation program. Although he's improving, particularly his speech, Sweet's main issue remains "coordination," Carter says, and he can't walk or play guitar or keyboard. He also has vision problems and is "generally wheelchair-bound in his home." In addition, Sweet's wife recently broke her leg, forcing the family to hire a full-time nurse — which is not covered through the singer's ACA insurance or early Medicare.

Since Sweet's stroke, his GoFundMe has raised nearly $640,000, which, Carter says, "paid for what can only be described as exorbitant medical expenses."

Sweet and his team view the crowdfunding not as an indictment of the U.S. health-care system but a mass validation of fan loyalty and colleagues' affection. Sweet may not currently be able to tour, but his decades of touring are paying off. "Don't dismiss the GoFundMe," Carter says. "It's a vehicle for fans to contribute. These are people that would spend $35 to see Matthew if he came through town in a second, and if they can spend $35 to help Matthew — clearly, they did it, instantly. They're willing to give back. That's a very positive thing."

BATTLE OVER SPECULATIVE TICKETS MOVES TOWARD LEGISLATION

Byrne onstage in February.

TODD OWYOUNG/PEACOCK

Critics say sites like StubHub need to stop selling tickets that their sellers don't actually own

CRITICS OF THE secondary-ticket business are warning that misleading offers on sites like StubHub and Vivid Seats are eroding consumer confidence in the live-event ticket business, and they're asking for lawmakers to intervene. Longtime music managers like Randy Nichols with the band Underoath say online markets are allowing resellers to list tickets to events that haven't gone on sale yet — from the 2026 World Cup to David Byrne's upcoming tour — and reap huge profits from fans who think they are buying legitimate tickets to major sporting events and concerts.

Speculative ticketing exists because of legal loopholes, Nichols says, as well as hundreds of millions of dollars spent on Google advertising and fan naivete. For Byrne's fall *Who Is the Sky* tour, for example, tickets didn't go on sale until mid-June, but ads for tickets on sites like StubHub and Vivid Seats began popping up seconds after the tour was announced. On StubHub, front-row tickets for his Nov. 20 show at Los Angeles' Dolby Theater were selling for about $1,100.

Often, the sellers of these tickets will only procure them after someone has agreed to buy them and will wait until a few days or weeks before the show to secure the tickets, knowing the price almost always goes down closer to show date. StubHub doesn't disclose that the people listing these tickets do not have them in their possession.

"The longer they wait, the more profit the scalper makes," Nichols says.

Now, he and groups like the National Independent Venues Association (NIVA) and the National Independent Talent Organization are lobbying at both the state and federal level to make such practices illegal. While legislation banning speculative ticketing passed in Maryland, lawmakers in New York state recently gutted a bill that would have outlawed it there. Officials like NITO executive director Nathaniel Marro are also worried about federal legislation like the TICKET Act, which originally had language banning the practice but has since been altered with a legal loophole that allows for speculative ticketing as part of a concierge service.

"Think of it like your favorite grocery delivery service — but for incredible experiences," Vivid Seats explains on its site. "You cart your selections; we'll handle the shopping."

"Many fans don't realize they could buy these tickets themselves," Nichols says. "The fan is tricked because most begin the process of buying tickets on sites like Google, where secondary sites spend hundreds of millions on deceptive ads and websites to trick consumers into thinking they're buying tickets directly from the box office."

While it's common for the price of a ticket to drop over time, there are exceptions: With Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour, sky-high demand made it impossible for some scalpers to fulfill their orders at the price they charged the customer. Some brokers fulfilled the orders at a loss to avoid being penalized by StubHub, but others simply canceled orders, leaving fans without tickets after having spent money on travel and hotels.

Nichols and Marro worry about the problems speculative ticketing will cause for major sporting events like the 2026 FIFA World Cup, which will take place across North America next summer. Tickets for the global soccer tournament have not yet gone on sale, but hundreds are listed across StubHub and Vivid Seats; a listing to sit on the pitch during the final match at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey is $1.1 million.

NIVA executive director Stephen Parker is worried that federal legislation could keep the practice legal for decades. "Lawmakers understand the issue but we're up against a well-funded lobby," Parker says. "The concern is that much of the progress we made at the state level will be lost with federal legislation."

—DAVE BROOKS

Doechii at WorldPride in Washington, D.C., on June 8.

Primary Wave acquired **The Cars'** artist royalties.

A report from global music publishing organization **ICMP** found that 16 of the world's top publishing markets are worth over $11 billion combined.

MONEY MAKERS

DOECHII'S 'ANXIETY' PAYS OFF FOR SAMPLED ARTISTS GOTYE, LUIS BONFÁ

The Florida singer-rapper's hit will pay dividends to the publishers of Gotye's 2011 smash, "Somebody That I Used To Know," and Bonfá's 1967 song "Seville," sources say

DOECHII'S "ANXIETY" ENTERED its fourth straight week at No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Radio Songs chart on June 10 after spending a total of 13 weeks on the Billboard Hot 100, where it has so far peaked at No. 9. But the track, which samples Gotye's 2011 song "Somebody That I Used To Know," isn't just a megahit for the Florida singer-rapper.

Billboard estimates the publishers of Belgian-Australian indie rocker Gotye and Brazilian-born jazz-pop artist Luis Bonfá — whose 1967 hit "Seville" is sampled in "Somebody" — could have earned $72,000 each since the release of "Anxiety" on March 4.

DMG Clearances, which secured consent from the copyright holders of "Somebody" for Doechii's team, declined to comment on the terms of the licensing deals, citing confidentiality.

Deborah Mannis-Gardner, owner/president of DMG Clearances, says that because "Anxiety" lifted directly from the original recording of "Somebody" to incorporate it into a new song, DMG secured consent from both the master and publishing rights holders. (Songs that interpolate rather than sample earlier hits only need consent from the publishing side.)

Mannis-Gardner says sampled songs benefit in two ways: First, the publisher gains an ownership stake in the new track, thereby increasing the size of its catalog. Additionally, fans of Doechii's "Anxiety" may find their way to streaming Gotye's "Somebody," which could then lead them to "Seville" — and both of those songs are likely to field synch inquiries.

Mannis-Gardner and Michael Poster, chair of music acquisitions and financing at law firm Michelman & Robinson, both say that in typical sample deals, the publisher owns a percentage of the copyright to the new song. Industry sources say it is also typical for publishers to negotiate a one-off, nonrecoupable licensing fee of at least a few thousand dollars.

If, as one-third co-writers, Gotye's and Bonfá's publishers negotiated 30% of the songwriting credit for "Anxiety," that could result in (since March 4) nearly $72,000 each to their publishers, with Gotye and Bonfá netting anywhere from $36,000 to almost $68,000, if they own their publishing and have administration deals, *Billboard* estimates.

Industry sources say Gotye's and Bonfá's publishers' likely received smaller cuts than that. However, what the artists stand to earn from the streaming and synch bumps to their catalogs, though harder to calculate, will also add to their bottom line.

Gotye

Bonfá

"A sample elevates and increases the value of a song," Mannis-Gardner says. "But keep in mind, music licensing, including sampling, is an emotional business. Approvals, denials and sample values are not based on a rate sheet. It is how the sampled copyright holder and creator feel about the new use."

"Sampling is a big business," Poster says. When an old hit is revived through a sample, both the masters and publishing rights holders stand to earn a cut, the publisher becomes a co-owner of the new song and the old song usually experiences an uptick in streaming activity and synch opportunities, industry sources say.

Doechii's "Anxiety," Gotye's "Somebody" and Bonfá's "Seville" have all had "a significant increase … in popularity and consumption" since the March release of Doechii's hit, says Pär Almqvist, CEO of Sweden-based publishing administration company AYO.

As of June 9, "Anxiety" has generated nearly 1.2 million song consumption units in the United States, where it has racked up nearly 165 million total on-demand streams and roughly 284,000 airplay spins, according to Luminate.

Billboard estimates that those streams, spins and sales of Doechii's "Anxiety" have generated about $1.2 million in master recording and publishing revenue combined so far this year. It's unclear exactly how much Gotye and Bonfá directly stand to earn from that amount, but "Anxiety" credits three songwriters: Jaylah Ji'mya Hickmon (Doechii) Walter André De Backer (Gotye) and Bonfá.

—ELIZABETH DILTS MARSHALL

BELIEVE AIMS FOR U.S. AS IT BUILDS GLOBALLY

The French company eyes the world's biggest music market as it continues to push its boundaries

IN 2023, Believe CEO Denis Ladegaillerie told *Billboard* he was eyeing the United States. Two years later, the Paris-based company is ready to expand its artist and label services business to the world's largest music market.

"We're building teams in 50 countries, and we're going to build more in other countries, starting with the U.S. this year," says Romain Vivien, global head of music and president of Europe. In fact, Believe is searching for a Los Angeles-based vp of labels and artist solutions for the United States who can "grow, scale and motivate high-output teams," according to the job posting.

Vivien

Founded in 2005 by Ladegaillerie, Believe has done brisk business by focusing on large European markets and developing markets globally. From 2020 to 2024, Believe's revenue rose 124% to 988.8 million euros ($1.1 billion) through organic growth and a mix of acquisitions and investments.

The opportunity in the United States is immense — but crowded with competitors. The country accounted for 38% of global recorded-music revenue in 2024, according to IFPI. That's 2.8 times more than Believe's top two markets, France and Germany, combined. Competition in the artist and label services realm already exists from Universal Music Group-owned Virgin Music Group, Downtown Music Group (acquired by UMG but not yet approved by the European Commission), Sony Music's The Orchard and AWAL, and smaller independents.

The Americas accounted for only 15% of Believe's revenue in 2024, well behind Asia, Oceania and Africa's 24% and Europe's 61%. Much of that Americas revenue came from U.S.-based digital distributor TuneCore, which Believe acquired in 2015, which had revenue of 64.6 million euros ($74.7 million). But TuneCore was dwarfed by the 924 million euros ($1.1 billion) generated from Believe's "premium solutions" business that spans labels and services for artists, labels and songwriters.

In the U.S. market, Believe will find a growing number of artists who want help building a career while retaining ownership of their rights. Independent distributors accounted for 91.8% of the 99,000 tracks uploaded to streaming platforms daily in 2024, according to Luminate, and independents' recent share of current recorded-music consumption has ranged from a high of 16.5% in 2022 to a low of 15.6% in 2024 by distribution. Within the major labels' share is an increasing number of licensing deals and joint ventures that give the artist greater ownership control.

Believe went public in 2021 and was taken private in 2024 by a consortium led by Ladegaillerie and two investors, EQT and TCV. (In April, the company launched a bid to acquire the remaining 3.3% of share capital, valuing the company at $1.8 billion.) The consortium survived an interested Warner Music Group, leaving Believe outside the control of the three majors. Not only did the move let Believe retain its independence, it left the company well-funded to pursue its mission. Says Vivien: "We are entrepreneurs who are helping and serving other entrepreneurs."—GLENN PEOPLES

DOECHII: PETE KIEHART/THE WASHINGTON POST/GETTY IMAGES. GOTYE: JON KOPALOFF/FILMMAGIC. BONFÁ: ABC PHOTO ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. VIVIEN: ANIS MARTIN.

Sony Music Publishing acquired **Hipgnosis Songs Group**.

Taylor Swift acquired the master recordings of her six **Big Machine** albums from **Shamrock Capital**.

From The Desk Of...

JW ROTH

FOUNDER/CHAIRMAN/CEO, VENU HOLDING CORPORATION

BY ERIC RENNER BROWN

TO JW ROTH, the future of the concert business looks a little like his own backyard. At his Colorado Springs, Colo., estate, the 62-year-old says he has "the largest residential firepit in the world" — approximately 300 square feet — around which he constructed "a small venue" where he gathers over 100 people for private concerts.

The fifth-generation Coloradan made his name as a founder of Roth Premium Foods, currently the third-largest prepared-food company in the United States. But despite lacking a professional background in entertainment or hospitality, the lifelong music fan and concertgoer got to thinking: What if the historically spartan amphitheater experience was more similar to his spacious, relaxed backyard?

With VENU Holding Corporation, which launched in 2017 as Notes Live, Roth wants to deliver his solution to markets across America. Today's audiences are increasingly gravitating toward premium live-music offerings, and he's betting that demand will sustain a fleet of high-end amphitheaters: Roth wants to build eight a year for the next three years, ranging in construction price from $130 million to $325 million, and he currently has over $1 billion in active projects in markets in Texas (Dallas, El Paso), Oklahoma (Tulsa, Oklahoma City) and Colorado (Denver). (In June, *Billboard* struck a three-year partnership with VENU that will power some of *Billboard*'s marquee events as well as a new award honoring industry disrupters.)

Roth also has a venue he can point to as proof of concept: Colorado Springs' 9,750-capacity Ford Amphitheater, which VENU opened last August at the base of Pikes Peak. Booked by AEG, Ford's 2025 calendar includes dates by Chicago, "Weird Al" Yankovic and King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard. During shows, concertgoers enjoy such posh amenities as elevated food and beverage options, temperature-regulating artificial turf for general admission and, for some, 132 luxury firepit suites — inspired by Roth's backyard.

Those suites aren't just the best places to watch a show at Ford — available for purchase at a smooth $250,000, they're core to Roth's "fractional ownership" model, which he compares to how The Ritz-Carlton sells timeshares. Five months after putting Ford's up for sale, he says he had sold them all out to the tune of $33 million.

As Roth eyes expansion for VENU, he's keen on making his customers investors in his business, which is already listed on the New York Stock Exchange. Certain share purchases even come with loyalty perks such as free concerts.

DANIEL BRENNER

Clio Massey and **Matt D'Arduini** were named co-presidents of **Arista Records**, succeeding **David Massey**.

VNYL acquired **Vinyl Me, Please**, which was facing bankruptcy and liquidation.

Roth says his decision to take VENU public was inspired by an entrepreneur very much in the news these days. "Love him or hate him, I am a fan of Elon Musk," he says. "Some days you love him, and some days you question him, right? But I thought he did a terrific job of inviting his customer to be his shareholder, and I admired him for that."

Why did you think applying premium experiences to outdoor amphitheaters would work?
I know the fan. I go to so many concerts, and I'm around [them] all the time. I know that there is a segment of fans that would embrace the premium experience. I needed to prove it, but I knew it would happen. Every area [at Ford] is premium, whether you're buying a $45 lawn ticket — it's the most premium lawn ticket you'll buy in all of music — or you're buying a lower-bowl regular seat or a club seat.

What's your financing model?
The municipalities participate to the tune of about 40% of the overall cost. And that comes in three ways. The municipalities that I work with have contributed the real estate, infrastructure and abatements on property taxes and rebates on sales tax. When you take those three buckets, it's about 40% of the entire project cost. Secondarily, fractional ownership represents about 40% of the overall cost. The last 20% comes from the profitability of our current existing operations. And our current and existing operations were all financed by, primarily, me.

How did you choose Colorado Springs as the first market?
That's where I grew up. I've lived here for 62 years. I have to be hands-on on crazy concepts that I have, whether it's building a nutty thing in my backyard or an amphitheater. I knew that I could ultimately roll these out across the country, but the first one I had to live there every day, and I had to sit in every seat. All my seats I had custom-made in China. They're 3 inches wider than any other seat in music today; they're comfortable. Each one of them has a cup holder and extra room for people to walk by. Everything about [Ford] is different. It cost me 5 acres more to build [Ford] because I wanted it roomy in those kinds of areas.

> **"The next venues that I'm building will be the first multiseasonal outdoor amphitheaters ever created. I want to be able to have a show comfortably at 70 to 75 degrees when it's snowing outside."**

You're partnered with AEG for Ford and are exploring partnerships with Live Nation in other markets where VENU is in development. What has fostering relationships with those competitors been like?
In my mind, they're segregated. At the end of the day, business is about fostering relationships, whether I'm selling chicken or building amphitheaters. I foster relationships with both because they both have a place in this world that I'm trying to build.

How do the venues you're building in Texas and Oklahoma differ from Ford?
The next venues that I'm building will be the first multiseasonal outdoor amphitheaters ever created. I want to be able to have a show comfortably at 70 to 75 degrees when it's snowing outside. Obviously, it's costing a lot more money to build these, but I will program them year-round. There's a difference between seeing a show in February in a hockey arena and seeing a show in a fan-centric, perfect-sound environment outside [where] it's snowing and it's 75 degrees.

How did you choose Oklahoma and Texas?
My site selection always starts with, "What does natural routing look like?" Coming from Colorado Springs, natural routing would be Kansas City, Tulsa, Oklahoma City [and Texas markets] Dallas, Fort Worth, El Paso and/or Houston. I go into those markets [to determine], "Do they have an amphitheater? If they do, is it cool or is it at the zoo?" Then I reach out to those municipalities. Does the demographic fit the demographic of both the firepit suite buyer and the [standard] ticket buyer? Is the [metropolitan statistical area] bigger than a million people? Then at the end of the day, I reach out to my partners, the Live Nations and the AEGs, and go, "Can we program this? If I do it and I spend $200 million or $300 million doing it, can we program it?"

El Paso — I'm so damn excited about it I can't see straight. Because I think the south side of the [border] will produce as many ticket buyers as the north side. Latin music is exploding to the point that that amphitheater will roar. I fly to Mexico City early next week, and I'm working with a big organization there — I can't tell you who it is — to really develop the idea in El Paso, and then, ultimately, my first venue I'm going to build outside the country will be in Mexico.

You mentioned natural routing. As VENU expands, do you envision creating a network of venues that artists could route entire tours through?
I don't know if it ultimately goes there, but I'm building it that way in the event that it does. But today it doesn't.

With that in mind, can you share any details about future markets you're targeting?
I'm going to come up through Florida, the Carolinas, Georgia, Tennessee. I've got two routes that we're very close to being able to announce later this year, but I am hell-bent to get onto the East Coast. ■

From left: HAIM's Alana, Danielle and Este Haim.

TERRENCE O'CONNOR

Too Legit To Quit

With its fourth album, HAIM has never made caring less look (or sound) so good

BY TAYLOR MIMS

THE HAIM SISTERS have a digital folder on their phones full of 2000s-era paparazzi photos. "We've been collecting them all like trading cards," Alana Haim says, calling in from England with her sisters and bandmates Danielle and Este, days after performing at BBC Radio 1's Big Weekend in May. "We've cried laughing."

It all started with a re-creation of the infamous 2001 shot of a euphoric Nicole Kidman walking down the street soon after finalizing her divorce from Tom Cruise. (Kidman later clarified the photo was actually taken while filming a movie, but the myth lives on.) HAIM channeled that feeling in the artwork for "Relationships," the lead single off its fourth studio album, *I Quit*, out June 20.

"She is evoking every emotion we thought 'Relationships' was representing," Alana says of the track that showcases the group's signature pop-rock charisma as the members grapple with "fucking relationships." They enlisted photographer Terrence O'Connor, who worked with Charli xcx on single artwork for last year's *brat*, and re-created three of Kidman's poses to accompany the song's release in March.

Since then, HAIM has kept the theme going. The group re-created a paparazzi photo of an exasperated Kate Moss leaning against a car for the contemplative follow-up single "Everybody's Trying To Figure Me Out," then a snapshot of Jared Leto looking at his phone while kissing Scarlett Johansson for the unapologetic "Down To Be Wrong," both of which the band released in April. The latest photo to receive an homage was of Keira Knightley in a comically large scarf and low-cut jeans walking around Manchester, England, with Jamie Dornan for the reminiscing "Take Me Back," which arrived in May.

While the folder of paparazzi pics is continuing to fill up, fans won't get an obvious choice like the Lindsay Lohan, Paris Hilton and Britney Spears photo of the trio crammed into the front seats of a car after a night out in 2006. "That's too on the nose," Alana says. "We're at least *trying* to challenge people. We're not doing a good job."

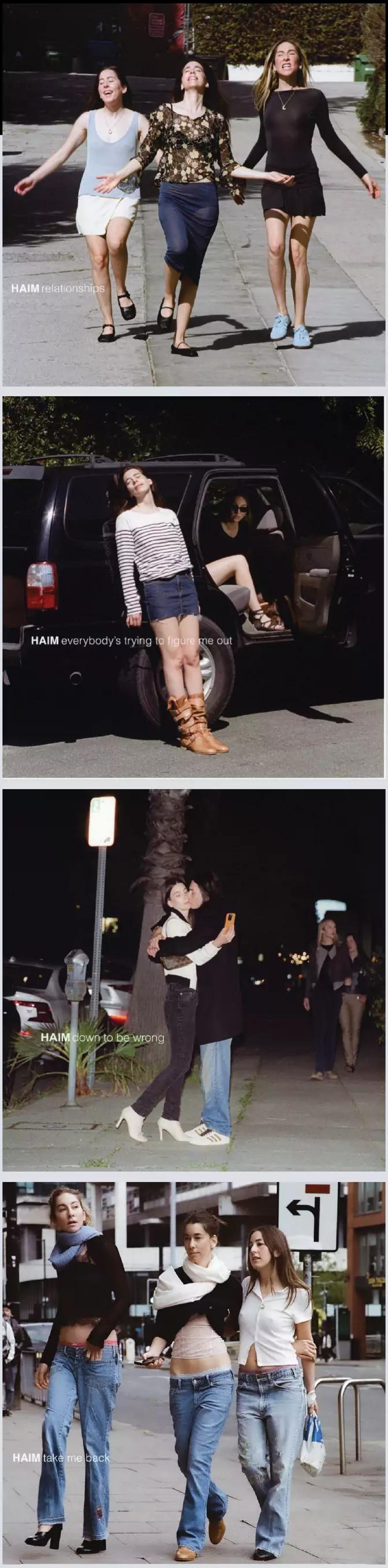
The images are just as much inspired by the 2000s as the album itself, with the sisters — now 39 (Este), 36 (Danielle) and 33 (Alana) — tapping into the sound of their teenage years before they officially launched HAIM with a self-released digital EP, *Forever*, in 2012.

"The [early-2000s] era was very informative for us musically — it was the first time we had a CD player in Este's '96 Honda Passport," Danielle recalls. "The world opened up for us, and that era was such an amazing time for music."

"I forced Danielle and Alana to listen to all the music that I was listening to, but we all collectively fell in love with a lot of those bands like Cat Power, Animal Collective, Pavement, Rilo Kiley, Wilco, The Strokes. It was such an amazing time for rock music," Este says. "It was such a free-spirited time for us because, like most kids, once you get your license, it opens up the world."

I Quit incorporates many of that era's popular sounds, from the post-grunge guitar of "Lucky Star" and "Now It's Time" to the alt-rock/electronica flare of "Million Years." Meanwhile, "Cry" and "Blood on the Street" tap into the country-pop of The Chicks and Shania Twain, the latter of whom Danielle says was "a huge part of our musical upbringing."

The siblings grew up playing instruments and performed in their first family band, Rockinhaim, as children with their parents in the valley outside of Los Angeles.


HAIM relationships
HAIM everybody's trying to figure me out
HAIM down to be wrong
HAIM take me back

From top: Artwork for the singles "Relationships," "Everybody's Trying To Figure Me Out," "Down To Be Wrong" and "Take Me Back."

> "WE PUT OUR HEART AND SOUL AND SO MANY EMBARRASSING STORIES INTO THIS ALBUM."
>
> —ALANA HAIM

Since forming HAIM, the trio's first three albums have all landed in the top 15 of the Billboard 200. The 2020 release *Women in Music Pt. III* was a particular turning point for the act, as the set also hit No. 1 on Top Album Sales and earned an album of the year nod at the 2021 Grammy Awards — making HAIM the first all-women rock band to compete in the category.

While *I Quit* taps into much of the group's formative years, the album's underlying theme is distinctly modern: The sisters say that the title means they are done caring about the nonsense that used to bother them, from bad dates to feeling shame in their sexuality. At two hometown underplay shows in April, HAIM revealed the album's title with a scrolling background of text reading: "I quit what does not serve me," "I quit shame," "I quit judgment," "I quit dick."

Luckily for fans, the band insists this will not be the last HAIM album, despite taking the last few years to work on solo efforts. Alana starred in 2021's *Licorice Pizza*, Este served as a music consultant for the second season of HBO's *The White Lotus*, and Danielle continued to collaborate outside of the group with artists including Bon Iver.

Now HAIM is reinvigorated to explore its next chapter together, thanks in part to new management — the band signed with Janelle Lopez Genzink and her women-forward artist management group, Volara, whose clients include Sabrina Carpenter and Marina — and a fresh outlook on its place in music. "As artists, we have a lot of ideas and a lot of things we want to do," Danielle says. To which Alana adds: "The new energy has felt so great. We work well in chaos, and it's so nice to have people around you that are down."

After writing an entire album about the male rock scene not giving them their due (*Women in Music Pt. III*), they are done seeking approval. Ironically, the praise has since poured in: In the last month, Sheryl Crow and Heart's Nancy Wilson have commented on clips of their performances on social media while longtime friend and fan Stevie Nicks told *GQ* the sisters could have easily been members of Fleetwood Mac.

As for why the album's singles have resonated so strongly among such a crowd, Alana believes it comes down to one thing: "We put our heart and soul and so many embarrassing stories into this album," she explains. "We're oversharers on this." ■

Q & A

'Somehow, My Voice Was There'

A ROBIN REDBREAST has alighted on Barbra Streisand's windowsill. Sitting with Jay Landers, her A&R executive at Columbia Records for three decades, the multihyphenate legend, 83, is taking a moment amid her busy schedule to appreciate the little gifts nature provides. Her new album, *The Secret of Life: Partners, Volume Two* (out June 27), is her first since 2018's *Walls* and a sequel to 2014's *Partners*. The duets project finds her singing old chestnuts ("The Very Thought of You" with Bob Dylan) and songs written by her collaborators ("My Valentine" with Paul McCartney and "Letter to My 13 Year Old Self" with Laufey). It also features a few new tracks, such as "To Lose You Again" with Sam Smith and "One Heart, One Voice," a cross-generational collaboration for the ages that teams her with Mariah Carey and Ariana Grande; both songs were co-written by Walter Afanasieff, who co-produced the album with Peter Asher.

In your 2023 memoir, *My Name Is Barbra*, you wrote that Bob Dylan wanted to sing with you in the '70s but you demurred. How did it feel finally singing with him?

BARBRA STREISAND The interesting thing is that I saw it as an acting piece. It's two different people, how they were feeling each other out: what kind of emotions are going on when two people have known of each other for such a long time but never met. It was wonderful to work with him, actually. I did my part earlier in the day, and it worked out perfectly with his. I'm ever the director. And he wanted direction, which was so lovely: "What do you think? What do you want?" He just was so open to trying this or trying that. It was really easy.

Both your careers began around the same time, just blocks away from each other 60 years ago in New York.

STREISAND I talked to him about our pasts; we never met but we were in Greenwich Village at the same time, finding our way, unknown — me at the Bon Soir [a defunct nightclub] and him with his guitars playing his clubs. It's interesting we finally met.

Josh Groban features on "Where Do I Go From You" and is the only singer here who also sang on *Partners*. What is it about him?

STREISAND He had the voice for it. I always loved that song — it was from a Broadway play that never got onstage [*Beba's Mambo*] — and somehow, we made it into a duet. Everybody who I worked with was wonderful. It was easy and enjoyable, which I loved about it. I hadn't sung in a while, so I didn't even know if my voice was going to show up. I gave a little prayer to God as I approached the microphone that first time, and somehow, even not having sung for a while, my voice was there.

How long had it been since you had sung prior to recording this?

STREISAND I can't even imagine. When did I make my last album? I don't keep track of myself, actually. Jay, do you know what my last album was before this?

JAY LANDERS Your last album was *Walls* in 2018. Two years into the Trump administration.

And here we are again. How are you keeping sane during these times?

STREISAND Well, I write my tweets. I try to keep calm. I try to know time will go and things will change again. I have to keep hoping. You have to keep sanity in your mind. I pray a lot. Prayer helps, I'll tell you that. That's all I can do right now. —JOE LYNCH

From left: Rhein, Jones and Frazer of Durand Jones & The Indications.

GEEKING OUT WITH...

Durand Jones & The Indications

Across their first three albums, Durand Jones & The Indications have delved into sounds from decades past to create a fusion of heartbreaking jazz, ravishing soul and electrifying disco. For its fourth studio album, *Flowers* (out June 27 on Dead Oceans), the trio of Jones, Aaron Frazer and Blake Rhein is tapping its own history for a sound that melds the members' individual influences. "There's a lot of fantastic music that sounds very similar act to act," Frazer says. "We've found a sound that people can't imitate — and sounds distinctly us." Here's what inspired the group to achieve that sound while creating *Flowers*. —TAYLOR MIMS

Listening Sessions

Having debuted in 2012, the trio felt comfortable telling management it didn't want to work on a timeline for *Flowers*. "The first time I hung out with Blake and Aaron outside of school was sitting on a couch, listening to music and talking about it," Jones recalls of how the band ultimately formed. "We didn't want to feel any pressure [with this album]. That allowed us to have some space to chill, listen to some music, talk and see where each person's ears are at."

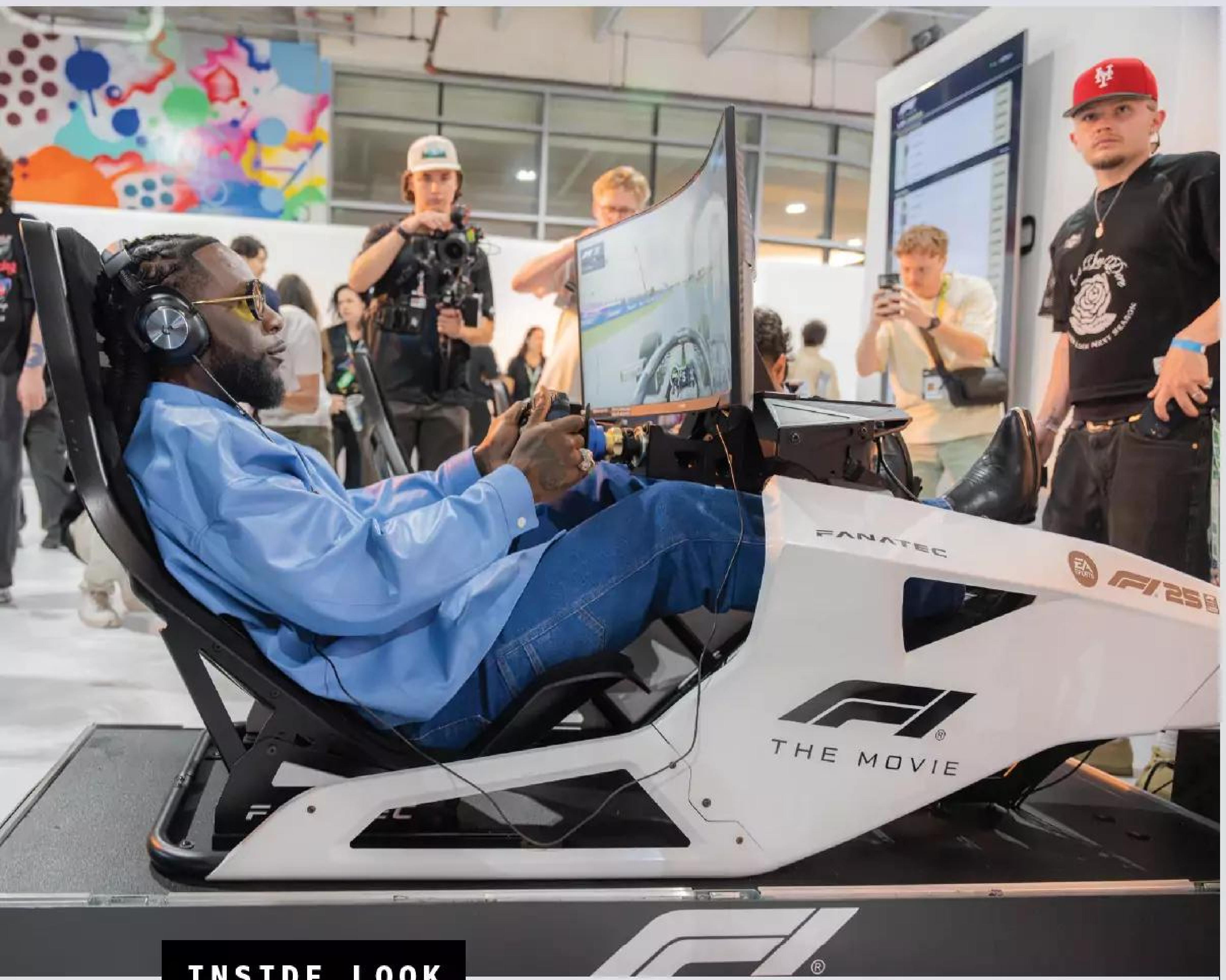
Quilts

An avid quilt collector, Rhein has two from the 1800s hung in his home studio where the group recorded *Flowers*. When the band drove to North Carolina to record a portion of the album, Rhein purchased a vintage quilt along the way and used it for acoustic paneling and muting the drum kit. "The first one I found is called a crazy quilt, and they're made from all these scraps. They're little bits that kind of look like stained glass mosaic," Rhein says of one he found in the trash and cleaned himself. "I have an appreciation for craftsmanship."

Movie Series

After long days in the studio, the trio would spend a few more hours at Rhein's Chicago home watching what Frazer describes as "bad movies" like the *Taken* trilogy and the made-for-TV Temptations biopic *The Temptations*, which he calls "a quote machine." He adds: "A lot of the time, friendship gets sidelined in favor of the more pressing dimensions of the relationship, which are business partner, creative partner, travel partner and performing onstage together. It's nice to be able to nurture the friendship part, which was a central pillar of this album-making process." b

STREISAND: KATHRYN BOYD BROLIN. DURAND: KALIE JOHNSTON.



Principals from the soundtrack joined the Miami activation for the project in April. Far left: Burna Boy. Above: Weaver (second from left) and Rosé. Left: Sexyy Red and Tiesto.

INSIDE LOOK

The Perfect Formula

Inside Atlantic Records’ hot streak of hit soundtracks, from *Barbie* to *Twisters* and now *F1*

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

WHEN ATLANTIC RECORDS’ Kevin Weaver was approached about the soundtrack to *F1*, he says the label didn’t face much competition. “The successes that we’ve had speak for themselves,” he notes, which include recent smash soundtracks to films including *Barbie* and *Twisters*. Both boasted chart-topping superstars and spawned multiple hits on the Billboard Hot 100 — and, in the case of *Barbie: The Album*, even landed three Grammys and an Academy Award. Which is partly why, Weaver adds, “We do get a lot of opportunities to see things early and first.”

Weaver, Atlantic’s president of the West Coast, was first approached about *F1* last fall by David Taylor, head of music at Apple TV+ and Apple Original Films. He was then introduced to director Joseph Kosinski and producer Jerry Bruckheimer, who showed him several scenes from the Brad Pitt-starring Formula 1 racing drama and discussed opportunities for music. “At that point, it felt undeniable to me,” Weaver recalls. “We knocked the deal out in less than a week — that is unheard of.”

F1
THE ALBUM
MUSIC FROM F1 THE MOVIE

The cover art for *F1: The Album*.

Weaver oversaw and produced *F1: The Album* — which received a kickoff at the Miami Grand Prix in April and will arrive June 27 alongside the film — with Atlantic executive vp/co-head of pop/rock A&R Brandon Davis and senior vp of A&R and marketing Joseph Khoury. This will be Atlantic’s first soundtrack release since restructuring as Atlantic Music Group, with Weaver sharing his gratitude for the “trust and support” from the new leadership team, including CEO Elliot Grainge, GM Tony Talamo and COO Zach Friedman. “From the very start with our launch at the Miami Grand Prix through each weekly single release, we’re lucky to have a team that is so dialed in,” he says.

Still, Weaver believes securing the deal might have been the easiest part of a process that has yielded one of the more genre-diverse soundtracks in recent memory, with contributions from Ed Sheeran, Rosé, Chris Stapleton, Myke Towers, Tate McRae, Burna Boy and more. “We try to look into a crystal ball,” he says. “And so as much as we go with the staples like the Ed Sheerans, trying to forecast artists that are going to be having the biggest moments around when we’re releasing the project and when the film comes out is always of critical importance, too.”

Plus, as Weaver says, Formula 1 is a “very global” brand, with the average F1 fan having music taste that is equally wide-ranging. “I went to a bunch of races. I got to spend time with drivers and team principals and immerse myself into the sport. A big part of general strategy was, ‘What are we doing that has a global feel?’ A big part of it was, ‘What kind of music would you hear when you’re in the paddock at an F1 race?’ ”

The A&R experience, as a result, was much different compared with last year’s soundtrack to *Twisters*, which primarily featured country stars — fitting for a film about chasing tornadoes in central Oklahoma. (*Twisters: The Album* debuted at No. 7 on the Billboard 200.)

Only one artist appears on both projects: Stapleton had an existing song in *Twisters* and contributed the original track “Bad as I Used To Be” to *F1: The Album*. “Part of what was exciting was [it would] put Chris on an album and a platform that played in a much broader way than the lane and genre of country music,” Weaver says. “Same thing when I went to Dom Dolla and Tiësto and Peggy Gou: These seminal dance artists saw an opportunity to sit on an album with other global superstars across a lot of different genres, and I think that was part of the coveted nature of why artists really wanted to be a part of this thing.”

For Sheeran in particular, his aptly titled track, “Drive,” came together quickly while he was in the studio with John Mayer and producer Blake Slatkin, saying that “the song fell out of us” after he had seen some of the film. (Dave Grohl is also on the track.) Sheeran recalls how Mayer “just whacked an octave pedal on and went wild” to come up with the song’s riff.

“Movies are my hobby and probably the only thing other than sport that I get, like, starstruck to be part of,” Sheeran adds. “Not just directors or actors or whatever, but being a part of the journey of a movie is so exciting for me.”

Of the album’s 17 tracks, seven singles are already out. McRae’s “Just Keep Watching” has become the first to enter the Hot 100, at No. 33. The song also scored her another No. 1 on the Hot Dance/Pop Songs chart.

“We set out to have multiple hits and to move culture. We always have our own odds of what we think are going to be *the* records, but then other records come out of nowhere,” Weaver says. “We always felt like the Tate song was going to be big. We always knew the Rosé song [“Messy”] was going to be special and really important. I feel really bullish about the Ed Sheeran song, the Burna Boy song [“Don’t Let Me Drown”], Tiësto and Sexyy Red [“OMG!”]. We have a lot of really strong records here. It boils down to which raise their hand.”

Until then, Weaver is already on to his next project — in fact, his next three are locked in. “I have one I can’t talk about specifically, but all I can say is we are doing the soundtrack for probably the most highly anticipated relevant global media [intellectual property] of our generation,” he teases. “And I think that is going to be a monster.” b

BURNA BOY, ROSÉ, SEXYY RED: EVAN HAMMERMAN. COVER: COURTESY OF ATLANTIC RECORDS.

billboard

2025

GLORIA ESTEFAN 50TH ANNIVERSARY

International superstar Gloria Estefan, *Billboard*'s most successful Latin crossover artist ever, celebrates 50 groundbreaking years in music with her 30th album, "Raíces" (Roots). With 100+ million records sold, nine Grammy Awards, an Oscar nomination, and status as the first Cuban-American honored at The Kennedy Center, Estefan's illustrious career includes the Presidential Medal of Freedom (2015) and Gershwin Prize (2019) shared with husband Emilio.

Beyond music, her humanitarian foundation, Emmy-winning Red Table Talk: The Estefans, Broadway musical ON YOUR FEET!, films, and bestselling books have reshaped cultural landscapes.

Her first all-Spanish studio album in 18 years, Raíces blends traditional tropical rhythms with contemporary production, honoring Latin music's heritage while pushing boundaries forward. As Latin sounds dominate global charts, Estefan's latest work powerfully reminds the world of her pioneering role in proving cultural authenticity and international appeal could brilliantly coexist.

Join *Billboard* in congratulating Gloria Estefan on her remarkable career over the past 50 years.

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ISSUE DATE 8/16 | **AD CLOSE** 8/05 | **MATERIALS DUE** 8/06

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PRIDE 2025

As the LGBTQ+ community continues to fight ongoing political backslides around the world, the music industry's queer leaders are doubling down on providing much-needed representation and visibility. The 27 executives on *Billboard*'s 2025 Pride List — from major labels to independent LLCs — make the business a more diverse, equitable and inclusive one with their work every day, while our cover star, Cynthia Erivo, uses her platform for good amid her rise to global stardom.

A FORCE FOR GOOD

Whether using her astonishing voice on screen, on her new album or at WorldPride, **CYNTHIA ERIVO** sees no limit to her potential: “If I can do it, then why not try?”

BY STEPHEN DAW

PHOTOGRAPHED BY ERICA HERNÁNDEZ

Erivo photographed April 21 at Milk Studios in Los Angeles.

Styling by Jason Bolden
Miu Miu bra, shirt and skirt.

THERE WAS A TIME when Cynthia Erivo could glide around town on her Razor scooter in peace. "Don't laugh!" she quips as she reminisces about those halcyon days while sitting in a cozy loft above a cavernous Los Angeles studio. "I've been doing it for years!"

Whether maneuvering New York's busy streets or transporting her from her L.A. home to a nearby studio to record voice-over work, Erivo's reliable kick scooter was once her preferred mode of transit. But even a decade ago, she was warned that her hobby wasn't sustainable with the life she was building. "[Director] John Doyle said to me, 'Cynthia, you're not going to be able to do that for very long,' " she recalls. "And I was like, 'But why? I'm good! It's fine!' "

His prediction ultimately came true. In the years since making her 2015 Broadway debut in Doyle's production of *The Color Purple*, Erivo has transformed from buzzy theater ingenue to certified, capital "S" star by practically every metric. At just 38, the multihyphenate is already nearly an EGOT (she's only missing her Oscar, despite three nominations); has starred in prestige TV series like *The Outsider*, *Genius* and *Poker Face*; paid tribute to musical legends at the Kennedy Center; and, most recently, scooped up that third Oscar nom with *Wicked*, the highest-grossing musical adaptation in film history.

Along the way, Erivo hasn't lost sight of what matters to her, using the star power she has accrued for good. When she publicly came out as queer in 2022, she cited the importance of helping "some young Black queer actress somewhere" feel less alone in the industry. In early 2025, she took home GLAAD's prestigious Stephen F. Kolzak Award for her continuing commitment to promoting visibility for the LGBTQ+ community. And earlier in June, she brought her talents to the massive WorldPride celebrations in Washington, D.C., making sure that everyone heard her voice — including politicians aiming to strip her community's rights.

> **"The more yourself you are, the more you are in front of people who don't necessarily understand, the better understanding starts to happen."**
>
> —CYNTHIA ERIVO

For her latest endeavor, though, Erivo decided to take the same energy she puts into both her community and others' projects and turn it inward. She didn't take to the stage or the screen, but rather the studio, looking to reinvigorate her solo music career — and the result is her revelatory second album, *I Forgive You*, released June 6 through Verve and Republic Records.

Back in September 2021, Erivo released *Ch. 1 Vs. 1*, her debut album of adult contemporary tracks where she aimed — and, reflecting today, thinks she failed — to provide a soundtrack to her life up until that point. "It never quite felt like it was mine," she says. She recounts working with a group of "lovely" producers and writers who provided plenty of new ideas and sounds — yet the project itself underutilized her own vocal dexterity. "It didn't feel like it was one uniform story."

So when she began thinking about her next album, she started from scratch. On the advice of *Wicked* co-star Ariana Grande, Erivo met with Republic Records chairwoman/chief creative officer Wendy Goldstein to discuss her strengths and figure out a path forward. What could Erivo do that no one else could? "Everything fell into place really fast from there," Goldstein recalls of their first meeting.

The answer was simple: Erivo's greatest asset is and always has been her protean voice, an instrument that belies her diminutive frame and lets her craft entire worlds of intricate harmonies. Her mother has said that she first heard her daughter sing beautifully at a mere 18 months old, though Erivo has since said she first recognized her own innate talent around the ripe old age of 11. Following a brief stint studying music psychology at the University of East London, she dropped out, later enrolling at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art in London (where she now serves as vp). After graduating in 2010 and spending three years performing around the United Kingdom, Erivo landed a breakthrough role in the off-West End production of *The Color Purple* in 2013.

"Anyone who saw her in that performance knew pretty quickly that she was just a generational talent," says Jessica Morgulis, Erivo's longtime manager who began working with her a year before *The Color Purple* transferred to Broadway in 2015. "In all my days of going to the theater, I've never seen the entire audience leap out of their seats mid-song in applause."

So when it came to creating her own music, Goldstein asked why Erivo wasn't leaning into her biggest strength. "When you hear Cynthia's voice, you're transfixed. I felt like we needed to lead with that," Goldstein says. "We spoke a lot about how to really highlight her vocals, using it as an instrument with stacking and layering to create beautiful production."

That, Erivo says, unlocked something for her. "Wendy is a very singular human being who just gets it," she says. "It was the first time that everything became really clear. To have someone who understands who you are as a musician and a singer and an artist was just a new experience within this space for me as an artist."

The subsequent project, executive-produced by Erivo and her longtime collaborator, Will Wells, spans pop, soul, jazz, disco, gospel and more, with her voice front and center. But more importantly, after a career dedicated to portraying characters, *I Forgive You* is just Erivo, telling the world who she is.

"People see a very cookie-cutter version of me, and we do this thing with people where we isolate them or crystallize them in one space and go, 'She's just that,' " she says. "People don't know me as a musician in the way they're getting to know me now."

AS ERIVO ARRIVES for our conversation, you'd never guess that she's coming off one of the biggest performances of her life. Less than 48 hours earlier, she was belting out her forthcoming ballad "Brick by Brick" and Prince's "Purple Rain" alongside maestro Gustavo Dudamel and the Los Angeles Philharmonic during a surprise appearance at the orchestra's Coachella set. "I was so surprised at how vast that audience was," she giddily admits. "It was unbelievable."

Though Erivo remains humbly awestruck by the ensemble inviting her to perform for her biggest crowd to date, her own reputation has preceded her from the jump. "I mean, for anyone who likes singers, all of our algorithms were just filled with endless bootlegs of her singing her fucking ass off," all-star songwriter Justin Tranter says of her Tony Award-winning Broadway debut.

But while the world was tuned in to Erivo's jaw-dropping performances of the *Color Purple* showstopper "I'm Here," she found herself focused on something else entirely while playing the character of Celie: her sexuality. "I hadn't really ever explored [my queerness]; I hadn't really ever discovered or understood or really learned about it," she says. "I was like, 'Oh, I get to play this woman who is exploring and learning about her own queerness at the same time as trying to discover what love is.' This sort of wonderful thing happened at the same time — I got to do the same for myself."

Erivo had been out to her close friends and family since her early 20s, but playing Celie for two years began to open the door to come out publicly, as fully embodying the experience of a queer woman eight times a week slowly made her more assured. "It's like your feet finally hit the ground," she explains. "Even the work that I started doing, whether I'm on a set or in a studio, I just felt a lot more relaxed."

With that newfound sense of ease came a wave of projects. After closing out her run in *The Color Purple*, she booked her first film roles, in Drew Goddard's *Bad Times at the El Royale* and Steve McQueen's *Widows*, holding her own on screen with stars like Viola Davis and Jeff Bridges. Her starring performance in 2021's *Harriet* earned Erivo her first pair of Academy Award nominations (for best actress and best original song) — had she won, she would have become the youngest person ever to earn EGOT status.

"How lovely is that? To be in this position at this point in my career is one, a privilege — but two, a massive surprise," Erivo says of her near EGOT. "To be one of those people that's on the edge of even looking that in the face is quite wonderful."

MAKEUP BY JOANNA SIMKIN AT THE WALL GROUP. NAILS BY MYCAH DIOR. SET DESIGN BY TERRY WATSON.

McQueen dress.

Morgulis credits Erivo's sharp instincts, saying she's "almost never wrong" when picking projects and pointing to her client's multiple viral performances at the Kennedy Center Honors, where Erivo has honored Dionne Warwick, Julie Andrews and Earth, Wind & Fire, as an example.

"Often, the producers of something like that will be leaning one way because whoever it is you're paying homage to has some favorite song of theirs they want to hear," she says. "But Cynthia knows herself so well and will say, 'I know I can really give this individual the best performance from me if we do this other song.' And every time, she nails it."

Yet despite her many successes, Erivo says nothing could have prepared her for the cultural phenomenon that was *Wicked*. She knew the film would do well, but she never predicted it would break box-office records and earn a whopping 10 Oscar nominations. "It's insane," she says. "And it's insane while it's happening, too."

Of all *Wicked*'s achievements, none shocked Erivo as much as the soundtrack's immediate *Billboard* chart success. It bowed at No. 2 on the Billboard 200 (the highest debut for a film adaptation of a stage musical in the chart's history), ruled the Top Album Sales and Vinyl Sales charts and landed seven songs on the Billboard Hot 100, with her own version of "Defying Gravity" earning the highest position among them at No. 44. "The cast was like, 'Oh, so it's just in the ether now? People are just listening to it on their way to work at this point?' " Erivo recalls. "It's really wonderful."

The second part of the duology, *Wicked: For Good*, will arrive in November, and Erivo warns fans unfamiliar with the source material that her viridescent heroine, Elphaba, enters much darker territory in the second act. "She's able to access her rage more," she says. "The scent I wore changed. The make-up changed. Little shifts that bring you to a more mature version of who Elphaba becomes. And she is *delicious* in this next one."

The Wicked Witch of the West isn't the only one who has changed in between the two films' releases — with rave reviews and another Oscar nomination for her stellar performance in the first act, Erivo became a household name practically overnight. That transition has occasionally felt scary, especially when it comes to maintaining her personal privacy.

"I think there is an interesting thing that happens, where it's assumed that because you're in the public eye, everything is for everyone," she explains. "But being in the public eye does not stop you from being a human being — you just have eyes on you now. I am totally OK to share *some* of my life — whenever you see me on the stage, whenever you hear me sing, whenever you see me act, I am sharing. But that doesn't mean that *everything* gets to be yours. I should be able to keep something for myself."

That "something" likely includes her visible, but never publicly confirmed (including for this story) relationship with lauded producer-writer Lena Waithe. "You also wouldn't want me to share everything — nobody should have to, because then what's left?" she says with a half-smile. "You can be grateful, but you can still have a boundary."

But thanks to the groundwork she has laid over the course of the last decade, Erivo says she doesn't feel flummoxed by her sudden stardom. "I'm glad that I had those breakthroughs before — it's school for what might come, and it means that here and now, it doesn't feel like it's going to sweep me up," she says. "A lot of us fear that if this happens, you'll sort of lose yourself. But I still feel like myself."

THERE IS A MOMENT in "Play the Woman," an early, R&B-adjacent standout from *I Forgive You*, when Erivo taps an unexplored topic in her career thus far: unabashed desire. "I could run these hands of mine down the map of your spine/ Feel how your heat against my fingertips could make the blood in me rush," she croons on the prechorus before blooming into her glossy head voice: "Could you play the woman for me?/Go slow, 'cause I like what I see."

Erivo had long wanted to explore sensuality in her acting. But when the parts didn't materialize, she decided to take matters into her own hands. "Honestly, you rarely get that opportunity as Black women anyway," she says. "So I was just like, 'Well, if I don't put it in my own music, I'll never get to put it anywhere else.' "

That ethos runs through *I Forgive You*, as Erivo breaks out of the boxes that the industry at large constructed around her ever-growing career while

Miu Miu top and shorts.

simultaneously giving voice to the parts of herself that she was once too scared to reveal in public. Whether she's providing a grooving rumination on self-doubt with "Replay" or delivering an airy ballad about finally finding connection after years of trying on "I Choose Love," Erivo lays all her cards on the table.

"It wasn't scary to write because I really didn't know how else to write it. It had to come," she explains. "The scary thing was getting ready to share it. When something is personal, you hope that people understand that your humanity exists and they're not just listening to random stories that come from nowhere."

When entering their sessions with Erivo, Tranter was already well-aware that she had one of the best voices in the business. What they quickly discovered was just how adept a songwriter she was, too. "She's a real visionary in that she knows what the fuck she's doing," Tranter says. "It's not even that I was surprised, it's just that the world doesn't know her that way. You don't know what to expect when someone like Cynthia hasn't been able to reveal all her talents yet."

That's a recurring theme in Erivo's career: One of the main hurdles she faced while working on her debut album was record executives who were unsure how to utilize her talents or market her. She recalls one telling her, "You can sing everything, and we don't know what to do with you." Her response? " 'Why don't we just try everything, then?' " she remembers. " 'If I can do it, then why not try?' "

It's a refrain Morgulis returns to often. With her client's aspirations spreading across multiple fields of entertainment, the manager says that it's vital for her to help Erivo remain in control of the projects she's working on. "That conversation of not putting her in a box and, importantly, not allowing others to put her in a box, is happening on every single level of her team," Morgulis says. "That act alone kind of sends a message to the industry of who she is and what direction she's going in."

And recently, Erivo has applied that philosophy to discussing her identity. After coming out publicly on the cover of *British Vogue* in 2022, she assumed

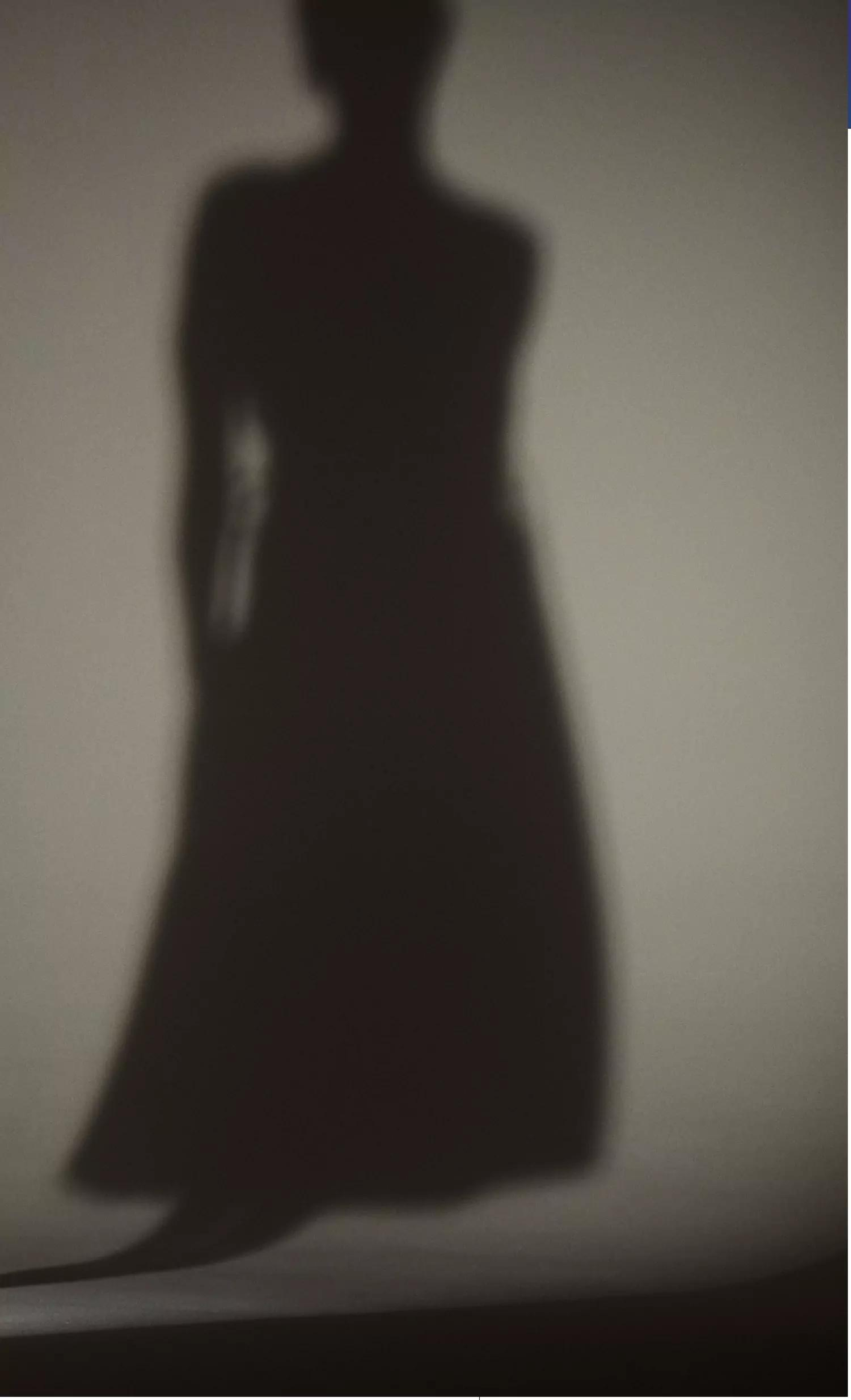
Prada top, skirt and belt.

a rare position in the entertainment business as a Black queer woman in the public eye, and it's a platform she takes seriously.

Her decision to come out, Erivo says, had less to do with her own sense of self-actualization and more to do with the deep sense of care she feels toward her community. "I think I was actively looking for those who were encouraged to be more themselves," she says. "I can't change a person's opinion of me; if they want to feel some way, there is nothing I can do about that. But I was so excited about being able to at least be one more face where someone could say, 'Oh, my God, *she* did it and can still do it. She's still creating, she's still making. So maybe I can also do the same.' "

In hindsight, Erivo says she didn't feel any trepidation about her decision to come out and didn't notice any significant change in the roles she booked or the feedback she received for her performances. "Maybe I'm naive and wasn't paying attention to it, because I'm sure there was [pushback]," she confesses.

The one notable exception came in early 2025, when the Hollywood Bowl announced that Erivo would star in the titular role of its upcoming three-night production of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. A predictable wave of conservative outrage followed at the thought of a Black queer woman portraying Jesus Christ, accusing the actress and the production itself of "blasphemy."



“What I’m leaning toward is just trying to be the best version of myself, full stop. And hopefully, the best version of myself is enough for those who want it.”

—CYNTHIA ERIVO

Erivo can’t help but laugh. “Why not?” she says with a chuckle and a shrug, before adding that most of those comments don’t seem to understand the critical lens of the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical. “You can’t please everyone. It is legitimately a three-day performance at the Hollywood Bowl where I get to sing my face off. So hopefully they will come and realize, ‘Oh, it’s a musical, the gayest place on Earth.’ ”

It’s easy for Erivo to dismiss a vocal minority decrying the mere announcement of her casting in a limited-run performance; it becomes much harder when the conversation turns to politics. Like many, she has watched in horror as the Trump administration has attempted to strip the rights of and federal protections for queer and trans people across the country through a flurry of executive orders.

Erivo doesn’t pretend to have all of the answers. “I’m trying to be a person you can get positive things from, because that is the only way you can balance this stuff,” she says with a sigh. But when she looks at something like the current administration’s “anti-woke” takeover of the Kennedy Center — the place where she has delivered some of her most iconic performances to date — she can’t help but feel a sense of dread. “I don’t know who gains what from that. I hope that it comes back,” she says. “It’s really sad to have to watch this happen to it. The Kennedy Center is supposed to be a space of creativity and art and music for everyone.”

Yet Erivo refuses to let that dread rule her actions. It’s part of why, during Pride Month, she performed a headlining set at the closing concert for WorldPride in Washington, D.C., alongside Doechii. “I want to encourage people to not decide to just tuck away and start hiding and not being themselves anymore, because that is exactly what they want,” she says. “The more yourself you are, the more you are in front of people who don’t necessarily understand, the better understanding starts to happen.”

Tranter points to that sentiment as a perfect example of why Erivo has become such a powerful voice in the entertainment industry. “Cynthia being Black and queer, and being one of the most famous people alive in this moment while our community is dealing with what we are dealing with, is no mistake,” they say. “For someone as talented as her to be a beacon for young Black queer people all over the world, to be in the most successful movie and releasing a gorgeous, poetic album in this moment is no accident.”

It’s apparent that Erivo holds herself to an incredibly high standard. As Morgulis rattles off the singer’s schedule for the next few months — wrapping up filming on the forthcoming feature film adaptation of *Children of Blood and Bone*, hosting the 2025 Tony Awards and performing at least six solo concerts around the country, among dozens of other obligations — she must pause for a breath. “It’s a lot,” she says. “But she can do it.”

But today, the singer stops short of perfectionism. Even in a career as fortunate as hers, she knows that she cannot be everything to everyone. “I used to say, ‘I don’t want to make any mistakes. I don’t want to get anything wrong,’ ” she recalls. “What I’m leaning toward is just trying to be the best version of myself, full stop. And hopefully, the best version of myself is enough for those who want it.”

EXECUTIVES OF THE YEAR

EMILY AND JAMIE DRYBURGH

The twin co-founders and co-CEOs of Young Music City are making connections, and creating new platforms, for Nashville's queer community

BY STEPHEN DAW

PHOTOGRAPHED BY EMILY DORIO

Emily (left) and Jamie Dryburgh photographed May 28 at The Fallyn in Nashville.

LIKE ANY GOOD SWIFTIES, Emily and Jamie Dryburgh keep finding connections between themselves and the biggest pop star in the world. As the twin sisters chat with *Billboard* over Zoom from their Nashville office, they rattle off a list of things they have in common with Taylor Swift: They are the same age, they're enterprising professionals in the music industry, and their office in Nashville's Midtown happens to be right across the street from Swift's apartment.

That literal proximity to Swift is fitting, the 34-year-olds say, considering how she helped inspire them to pursue their careers. "The first time I heard a Taylor Swift song — as obvious and cliché as it is — I realized that she was not only writing her own songs but that she was a businesswoman," Jamie recalls. "We were like, 'There's this girl out there who is our age, who feels like someone [we] would hang out with, and she's doing it.' It feels like she opened all these doors and all these opportunities for us."

As the co-founders and co-CEOs of Young Music City, the leading Nashville media and lifestyle LLC focused on the LGBTQ+ community, the Dryburghs, much like Swift herself, also believe in doing work with a centralized purpose. What started as a music blog in 2016 has blossomed into a coterie of entertainment brands — including the RNBW Queer Music Collective, Country Proud and Girlcrush — advocating for greater representation of and visibility for LGBTQ+ members of Nashville's music scene by promoting events and curating stages exclusively by and for queer people.

The pair's efforts have worked wonders for queer singer-songwriters like Adam Mac, who attended some of Young Music City's earliest showcases as an aspiring country artist. "When I first moved here, the only visual I had of a path that a queer person could have in country music was Shane McAnally," Mac says of the acclaimed songwriter. "I think Emily and Jamie really did lay the groundwork for feeding my confidence to say, 'No, you can keep going.' "

Born and raised in the upstate New York city of Elmira, the Dryburgh sisters say they dreamed of moving out of the frigid Northeast to find their passion in the warmer Southern states. Applying to colleges in the South "behind our mom's back," they ended up moving to South Carolina to attend Coastal Carolina University in 2009. Once there, they started traveling all around the South, attending concerts and festivals across genres and falling even more in love with music.

Where other fans might try and meet the headliners before their festival sets, the Dryburghs instead chatted up tour managers and assistants, learning how the industry worked in the process. "We'd hang out with them and hear their stories, and they would be like, 'Hey, you guys need to go be in the music industry,' " Emily recalls.

The duo took their advice, moving to Nashville and transferring to Belmont University's music business program in 2011. Upon graduating in 2013 — "on Taylor Swift's birthday," Jamie points out — they began working in as many different sectors of the industry as they could. Whether interning at small, independent record labels, directing A&R for boutique publishing houses or managing artists nominated by the Country Music Association (CMA) like Joshua Scott Jones, the Dryburghs sought to learn as much as possible through hands-on experience.

Along with that experience came some big personal realizations. Shortly after graduating from Belmont, Emily and Jamie both came out — and, in short order, noticed they identified with few others in the Nashville music scene.

Emily remembers a conversation with her boss at the now-closed publishing house Anchor Down Entertainment, where she worked as an intern shortly after graduating from Belmont. "I was like, 'I have to tell you something and you might fire me, but I just need to let you know that I'm gay,' " she says. "[My boss] was super supportive and just started naming people: Shane McAnally, Brandy Clark, all these high-level people that were queer. We had no clue because there were no spaces for us."

> **"Think bigger than just today or tomorrow. Think about years down the road. This is a much bigger conversation than just your bottom line."**
>
> —JAMIE DRYBURGH

The longer the Dryburghs spent in Nashville, the more they saw how few opportunities queer artists had. So they took action. In 2016, the two transformed their old blog, Twin Love ("It's so embarrassing," Jamie says with a laugh, "it was the shittiest blog"), into Young Music City, a fledgling media organization complete with a YouTube channel and Spotify playlist intended to give bubbling-under artists — many of whom identified as queer — a platform to share their music with a wider audience. "We had newsletters, we had filmed performances, we had all this stuff. We were just covering these bases before things like TikTok happened," Emily says.

But the Dryburghs found their biggest success with the first subsidiary they launched from Young Music City, the RNBW Queer Music Collective. When they saw a friend perform at an open-mic event titled Big Gay Showcase, they were surprised by the sheer number of people who attended. So Emily and Jamie decided to try their hand at creating communal spaces for queer artists, scheduling monthly RNBW showcases at Tribe, a well-known Nashville gay bar.

"We'd pack the house, but there were only about 15 active, out artists who would come and perform," Jamie says. After three years of staging their events, the pandemic hit. The sisters figured that their monthly showcase was over for good.

As they tell it, the opposite turned out to be true. During the course of the pandemic, as the Dryburghs scheduled livestreamed showcases for queer artists, they watched their online following grow as more talent started submitting themselves to be featured on the platform. The community that they had been seeking finally materialized. Once public-gathering restrictions were lifted in May 2021, the Dryburghs started booking weekly RNBW showcases at The Lipstick Lounge in Nashville's East End with smashing success.

"Post-pandemic, a lot of people found themselves, came to Nashville, and there is now this huge world there that was not there before. We [are] easily booking six different artists for every show," Emily says. "At this point, we've had almost 3,000 queer artists come through. It's been amazing."

Mac, who befriended the Dryburghs when he first moved to Nashville in 2012, says he has witnessed a shift in the city's queer music scene — one he attributes, at least in part, to the work that the sisters put into creating a welcoming space. "Before RNBW, there was no place [in Nashville] for creative queers to come together and have a space to share," he says. "It was so crucial for all of us."

Having created their own community, the Dryburghs then set out to enlarge that space. As they built relationships around town with LGBTQ+ organizations like Nashville Pride and set up bigger stages for holding their events, they saw an opportunity. When the now-closed entertainment site Nash News approached them about putting on a country-focused concert in summer 2022, they realized that the proposed dates fell during the four days of CMA Fest. The festival was already announced and only two weeks away, but the Dryburghs took their shot, emailing their CMA and CMT contacts to see what was possible.

"We heard back from both of them within the day," Jamie recalls. Soon, the Dryburghs were hopping on Zoom calls with executives from both organizations, pitching them on CMA Fest's first Pride-themed stage. When asked whom they could feature there with such little lead time, they pointed to the now-vast catalog of artists they'd worked with through RNBW.

Within a few meetings, they had successfully created Country Proud, the first-ever queer-focused event at a U.S. country music festival. "The audience response was massive — a lot of people who didn't know what [Country Proud] was still came through because we were able to bring in such great talent," Emily says.

The show's debut in 2022 was such a success that, in subsequent years, CMA Fest promoted Country Proud from a sponsored activation to its own main stages, bringing in artists like Brooke Eden, Angie K, Shelly Fairchild and Mac, who remembers going from local showcases to his first crowd of thousands thanks to Emily and Jamie's advocacy. "They got me my first major stage at CMA Fest," he says. "To see where all of this started to where it's at now has been a privilege."

But 2025 marks the first year since the Dryburghs helped make history with Country Proud that CMA Fest won't feature the event they created — a fact that they attribute, in part, to political pressures to reduce inclusive programming like Country Proud. "We anticipated it might be weird this year," Emily says with a sigh.

But the sisters are taking this difficult news in stride. After all, they point out, Young Music City started with grassroots organizing. "When these partners can't come in and when there's things that are against their control, that's where our work comes back in," Emily says. "If no one else is going to do it, then it has to be us. We can put on a show with our eyes closed at this point, so when organizations back out, it's important to say, 'OK, we're stepping in.' "

Jamie also says the music industry should take note of what has happened when major businesses have cut their diversity programs. As an example, she cites Target: After the retailer faced heavy criticism from right-wing activists over its 2023 Pride collection, the store rolled back many of its products supporting LGBTQ+ inclusivity for Pride Month 2024. Four days after Donald Trump's second inauguration, the company announced it was ending its diversity, equity and inclusion programs; in the following months, its foot traffic and sales plummeted.

"It's a losing strategy," Jamie says of anti-DEI efforts. "A large part of the population is somewhere in the queer community, and leaving them out doesn't serve your business." What might the music industry learn from these cautionary tales? "Think bigger than just today or tomorrow. Think about years down the road," she suggests. "This is a much bigger conversation than just your bottom line."

After growing Young Music City from a small online blog into one of the most active LGBTQ+ music organizations in Nashville, the Dryburghs are now looking at how to take their talents national. Emily lists just a few of their long-term goals, like opening an inclusive venue in Nashville or organizing a RNBW Queer Music Collective national tour.

And all the while, they will remain committed to creating connections for queer artists in need of support. "We've had artists like Kelsea Ballerini and JoJo and Julien Baker in the audience at RNBW shows," Emily says. "Our artists have met co-writers through these shows, met their spouses through these shows, and they keep coming because they know that this is a place where they can come and it's safe."

The sisters smile at each other. "That's the ultimate goal," Jamie says. "Just making our home a safer place."

"If no one else is going to do it, then it has to be us ... When organizations back out, it's important to say, 'OK, we're stepping in.' "

—EMILY DRYBURGH

JOE ABOUD

Founder/CEO, 444 Sounds

At a time when representation is under attack, 444 Sounds is a necessarily loud voice for queer diversity. With a client roster that includes queer artists like Jordy, Michaela Jaé Rodriguez and Snow Wife, the management group has helped to elevate queer voices both in the studio and throughout their corporate culture. With a new focus on synch placements and brand partnerships for artists who "are underserved in the marketplace," Aboud says the organization is "creating sustainable revenue streams for our artists to help them thrive beyond streaming."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "The industry needs to invest in queer talent year-round — not just during Pride Month."

MICHAEL ALLEN

Vp of marketing strategy, Republic Records

In a year of high-profile releases from *Billboard*'s Top Label of 2024, Allen says one was particularly meaningful: the *Wicked* soundtrack, which, at No. 2, notched the highest-ever debut on the Billboard 200 for a big-screen adaptation of a stage musical in December. "During a tumultuous time when the LGBTQ+ community was being attacked from all angles," he says, "I was honored to work on a project that spotlighted being different, the importance of speaking truth to power and holding those in power accountable."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "I would love to see the industry do more to support our LGBTQ+ artists, particularly with additional mental health support."

JORDAN ANDERSON

Talent booker, Troubadour

As the musical steward of one of the country's most iconic independent venues, where artists from Joni Mitchell to Metallica have made their Los Angeles debuts, Anderson has kept the 500-capacity Troubadour busy since joining the staff in 2021. "In 2024, I was able to break the Troubadour record for most shows booked in one year, surpassing just over 300," Anderson says. The nearly 70-year-old West Hollywood club hosted some of Anderson's favorite acts, including Medium Build, The Beaches, Midnight Magic, Role Model, Hermanos Gutierrez, Goose and Angie McMahon. "It's an honor to book such a historic room that was, in fact, founded by a gay man in 1957."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "More inclusivity and normalizing queerness in all spaces within the industry."

JOHN BOLTON

Senior vp, Oak View Group

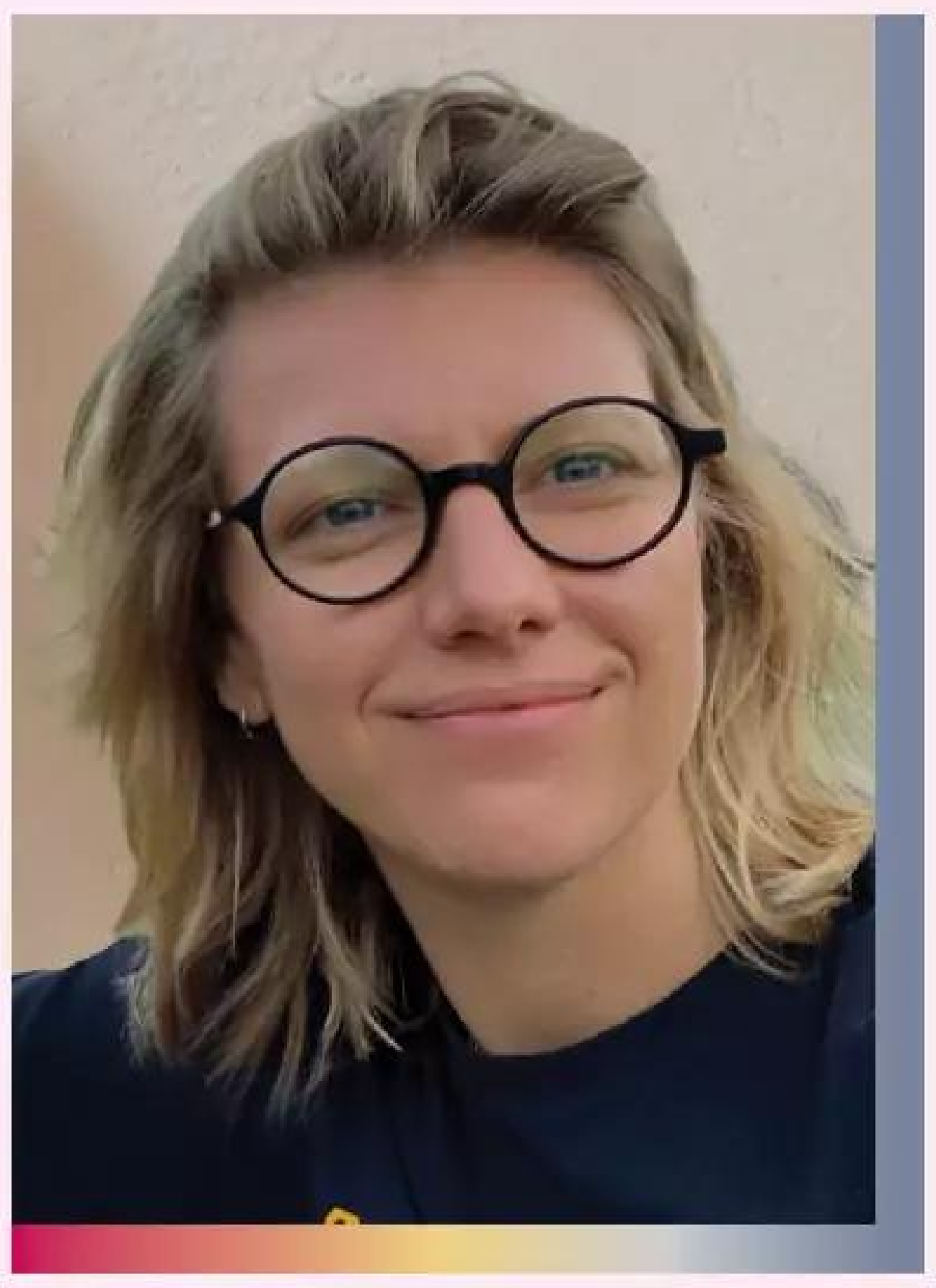
Oak View Group continues to expand its reach around the globe with new venues and operations partners in the United Kingdom, Mexico, Nigeria and more. As the live-entertainment and development company grows, it's making sure to take care of its LGBTQ+ employees. "Oak View Group proudly launched a workplace resource group for LGBTQ+ employees and allies this past year," Bolton says. "The program has created space for visibility, support and community across our global offices while spotlighting the powerful impact of our LGBTQ+ team members. It's been a meaningful step toward building a more inclusive culture and driving equity across all levels of our organization."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "We need to call out companies that have recently backed away from supporting LGBTQ+ communities — whether by withdrawing sponsorships, silencing internal voices or walking back public commitments. True allyship means showing up, especially when it's hard."

LAETITIA DESCOUENS

Partner/agent, Primary Talent International

Descouens points to a diverse Primary roster that has long focused on the LGBTQ+ community and has included acts like Ethel Cain, Rina Sawayama, Pet Shop Boys, Giolí & Assia, Taahliah, Hannah Wants and Absolute. She says being part of an independent company means "every agent and their teams only sign artists they really believe in" and that it's also empowering to work in an environment that enables being true to oneself. "We have a strong sense of integrity," she says. "This ethos has been ongoing for years at Primary Talent International, which is something I am extremely proud of."



HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "The industry needs to speak out and make sure they protect the trans/nonbinary community."

Actress-singer **MICHAELA JAÉ RODRIGUEZ** released her debut album, *33*, in September 2024.

ABOUD: SOPHIE SAHARA. ALLEN: REPUBLIC RECORDS. ANDERSON: WRENNE EVANS. BOLTON: COURTESY OF OAK VIEW GROUP. DESCOUENS: CARMELITA MORALES. RODRIGUEZ: AMY SUSSMAN/GETTY IMAGES.

LEE DOUD

Executive vp/head of agency, OUTLOUD

Over the last few years, Doud has been instrumental in helping grow the OUTLOUD Music Festival into a key element of Los Angeles' WeHo Pride while also expanding the larger brand into a vehicle that amplifies the voices of queer artists. This year, with the help of partner The Bowery Presents, the festival is hosting its first Boston edition with headliners Kim Petras and Trixie Mattel. "It felt really powerful and meaningful to put forth [these two] headliners in a city that has recently declared itself a sanctuary for transgender and LGBTQ+ people," Doud says. "The message behind that shows so much solidarity and love for this community."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE " 'DEI' is not a dirty word. In fact, having different perspectives and unheard stories can only broaden our views and enrich our culture and history."

EMILY AND JAMIE DRYBURGH

Co-founders/co-CEOs, Young Music City

See story, page 40.

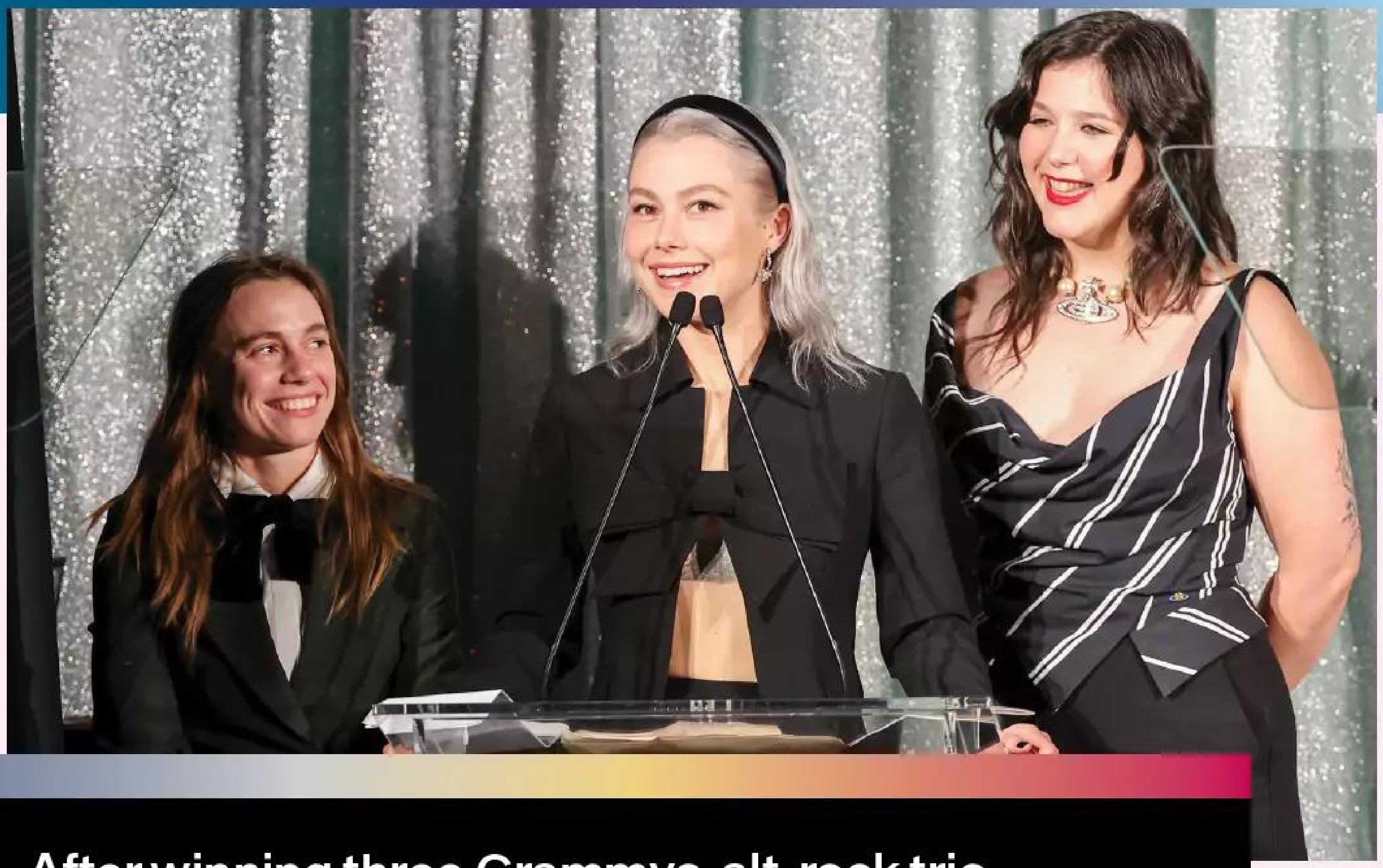
HALEY EVANS

President, Mega House

In the past year, Evans has enjoyed watching the "successful and exciting expansion" of Poems Publishing, the boutique firm she helped launch. "We're especially proud to have been part of one of 2024's biggest hits," she says, citing Benson Boone's Billboard Hot 100 No. 2 hit, "Beautiful Things," which Poems writer Jack LaFrantz is credited on. Other wins include Myles Smith's breakout track, "Stargazing," co-written and produced by Mega House client Peter Fenn, and Bailey Zimmerman's "Where It Ends," co-written by Mega House clients Grant Averill and Joe London.

LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT "The Trevor Project, Los Angeles LGBT Center, Point Foundation and the Human Rights Campaign."

DOUD: STEVEN JAMES. DRYBURGHS: EMILY DORIO. EVANS: WES O'CONNOR. GATES: COURTESY OF NETTWERK. GONCALVES: NEIL SHARUM. IKNER: COURTESY OF ADAM IKNER. BOYGENIUS: RICH POLK FOR BILLBOARD.



After winning three Grammys, alt-rock trio **BOYGENIUS** took home the 2024 UMG x REVERB Amplifier Award for "advocating for equality and other social issues" through its music.

TOM GATES

Senior vp of A&R and creative operations, Nettwerk Music Group

"We've been working with queer artists for well over 30 years now, well before it was 'acceptable' to do so and definitely when artists were terrified of presenting their true self, in life and in song," Gates says of the Canadian indie label that formed in 1984. "I can't think of a label with more LGBTQ+ artists on the roster — over two dozen — so being a consistent beacon is incredibly important to me," he says of Nettwerk, which is home to BEL, Miya Folick, Wafia, Wrabel and others. Gates says he's proud of Nettwerk's "commitment to these artists even in dark times," as well as helping LGBTQ+ creatives find "safe spaces ... to just show up and be themselves — and sing about whoever the hell they want to sing about."

LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT "The Ally Coalition does very important work, and the spirit that the founders and staff have is hard to beat."

FRANCISCA GONCALVES

Vp of global sync creative and strategy, synchronization, Universal Music Group

UMG deepened its support for a more inclusive industry over the past year through initiatives aimed at supporting voters, employees and artists, Goncalves says. Among the initiatives she's most proud of: UMG's Use Your Voice campaign, which partnered with HeadCount and GLAAD to mobilize voters and support LGBTQ+ youth with educational resources and anti-bullying programs. UMG continued to assist LGBTQ+ employees internally with its Pride, Respect, Inclusion and Support in Music group, and it honored three-time Grammy Award winners boygenius with the 2024 UMG x REVERB Amplifier Award for advocating for equality and other social issues from the stage.

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "Investing in queer talent at all levels and creating environments where diverse identities are not just visible but deeply valued."

ADAM IKNER

Senior manager of creative A&R, Sony Music Publishing

"As a publisher, I focus not just on making hit songs, but on creating community in every session," says Ikner, who feels he's in a unique position to guide queer musicians he works with to find "inclusive" spaces that let them make music more comfortably. "I intentionally bring in collaborators with shared backgrounds or experiences [to songwriting sessions]," Ikner says. "That kind of inclusivity helps LGBTQ+ people feel seen, supported and creatively free — and it's a mindset the whole industry should embrace."

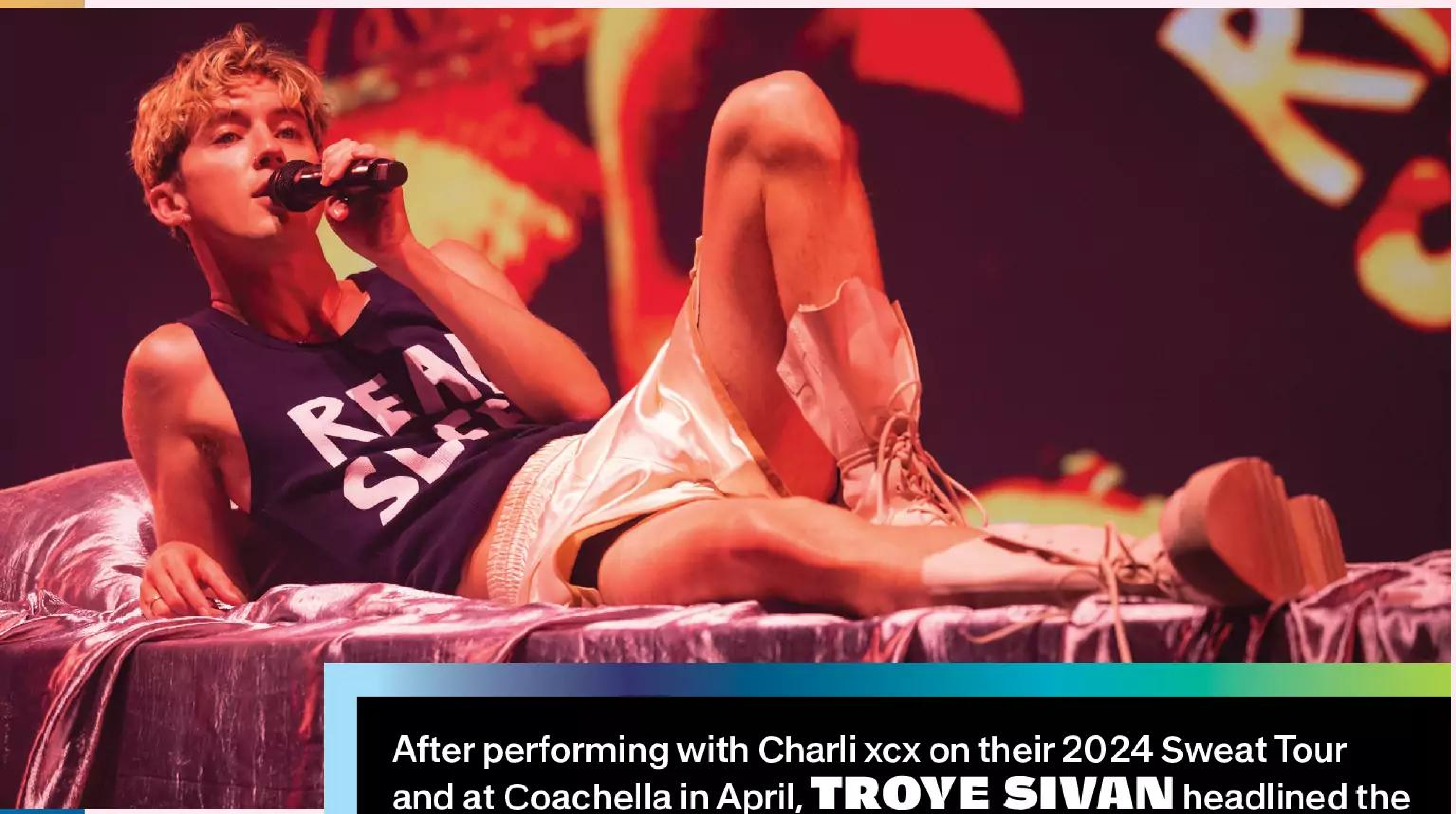
HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "The industry needs to be more intentional in its everyday actions — that's where real change starts."

RACHEL JACOBSON

Senior vp of creative sync, Warner Chappell Music

Landing a synch in an Apple ad would be enough, but landing two in an Apple ad filmed by Spike Jonze starring Pedro Pascal is hitting it out of the park. By working with two Warner Chappell Music artists to tweak existing songs — Sam i's "Perfect" and Guitarricadelafuente's "Conticinio" — Jacobson and her team provided the soundtrack that transports Pascal from the snowy tundra of heartbreak to the sunnier climes of single life. "It was a great example of what happens when creative synch, our songwriters and our partners all come together."

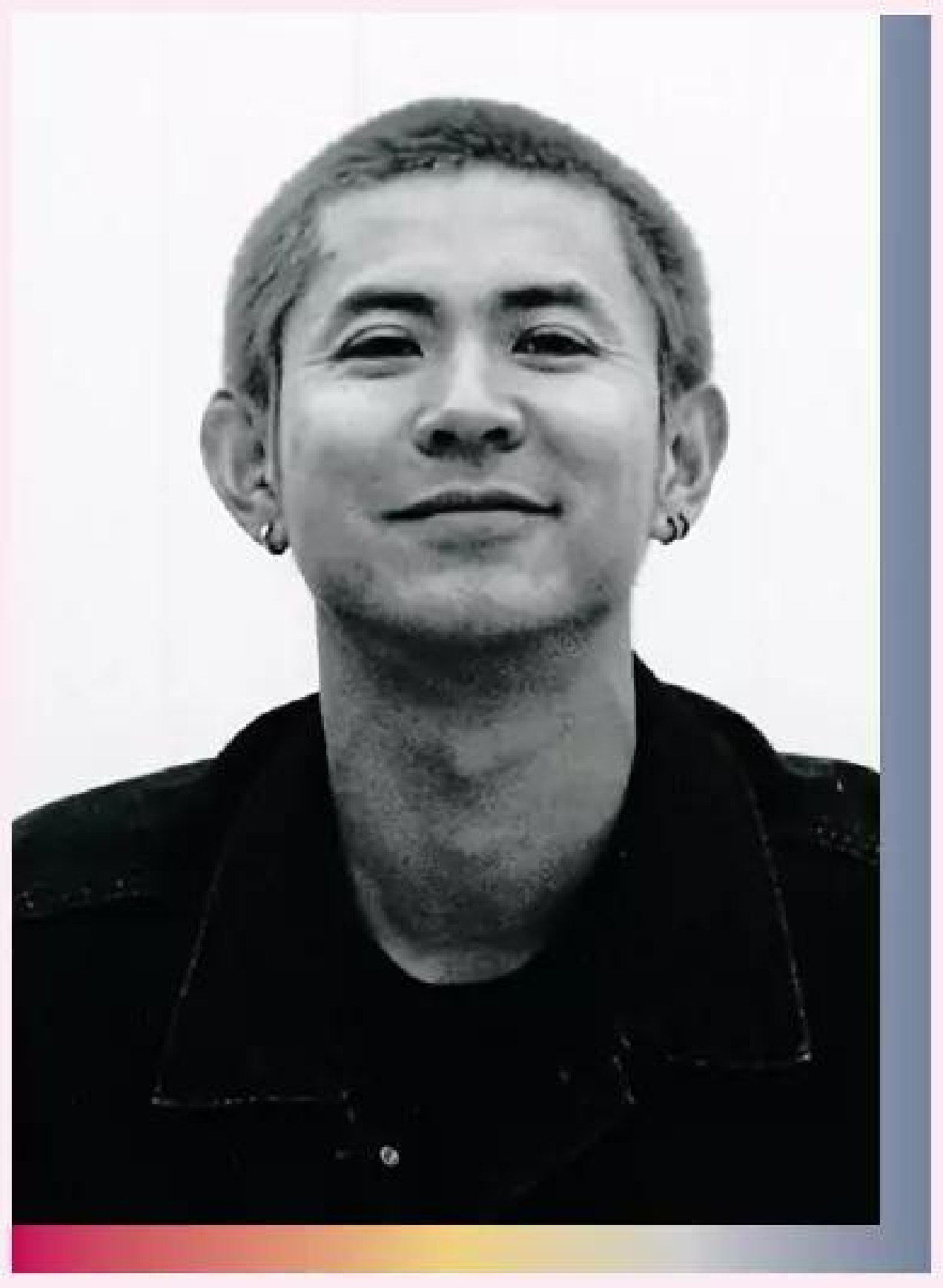
LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT "It's more important than ever to support our local community services like the Los Angeles LGBT Center."



After performing with Charli xcx on their 2024 Sweat Tour and at Coachella in April, **TROYE SIVAN** headlined the World Pride Music Festival alongside Jennifer Lopez.

TIM LE

Festival director, Goldenvoice



With Goldenvoice's impressive roster of festivals including Coachella, Stagecoach and Camp Flog Gnaw, Le has witnessed firsthand how vital the annual concerts are to music fans around the globe. He points to Portola and Head in the Clouds, two festivals that he runs each year, as key examples; in 2024, both events hosted audiences of over 70,000 to see major artists such as 2NE1, Justice and Disclosure. In 2025, Portola's aiming even bigger, with superstar acts like LCD Soundsystem and Christina Aguilera set to take over San Francisco's Pier 80 in September. "I'm happy I get to create that outlet for our fans at our weird little party," Le says.

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "The queer community has the best taste, ideas and culture. I'm proof of what is possible when we have the opportunity and support from leadership."

MATTHEW LIMONES

CEO, Prediction Enterprises

Over the past year, Prediction Enterprises negotiated and facilitated the "multimillion-dollar sales of top music catalogs from some of the biggest writers in Latin music," Limones says, highlighting clients such as Nacho, Frank Santofimio and Reggi El Auténtico. Prediction Enterprises also secured "a worldwide publishing deal and neighboring rights deal for Florentino [of Servando & Florentino] at peermusic," he adds, marking the first time the Venezuelan artist has made these agreements in his career. Under Limones' leadership, the company also resolved conflicting claims and recovered "significant amounts of unpaid monies for the use of their music."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "Create mentorship and development programs specifically for LGBTQ+ creatives and industry professionals."

GARWIN LU

Vp of sales, Live Nation

In his role at Live Nation, Lu has helped to bring brands including Chase, Dunkin' and Mastercard "into the live-music space in ways that genuinely connect with fans and grow their businesses," he says. Facilitating partnerships between major brands and festivals like Bonnaroo and Rolling Loud Miami has allowed Lu to scale up the level of further partnerships for future events. On June 6 and 7, he applied that savvy to the World Pride Music Festival in Washington, D.C., which was headlined by Jennifer Lopez and Troye Sivan, where he helped launch a new brand activation that was "a place for fans to recharge and refresh between sets."

LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT "The Human Rights Campaign, GLAAD and local LGBTQ+ centers in both Los Angeles and the Bay Area."

AUSTIN MARSHALL

Artist marketing director, UnitedMasters

In the last year, the indie distributor has "accelerated our international growth by partnering with a new wave of global talent," Marshall explains, citing new deals with artists including Nigerian producer Sarz, Chilean reggaetonero FloyyMenor, Indian genre-blender Mary Ann Alexander, Atlanta hip-hop duo EarthGang and U.K. alt-R&B artist Col3trane to help them reach broader audiences. "These partnerships underscore our commitment to building a globally minded company," Marshall adds, "one that champions diverse voices and cultivates creativity without borders."

LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT "G.L.I.T.S [Gays and Lesbians Living in a Transgender Society], GRIOT Circle, The Audre Lorde Project."

JACOBSON: JOHN DUBOIS. LE: COURTESY OF TIM LE. LIMONES: NATALIA AGUILERA. LU: BECCA MITCHELL. MARSHALL: SANGE WANGCHUK. SIVAN: MATT JELONEK/GETTY IMAGES.

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2025

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R&B/hip-hop dominates every other genre, claiming one-quarter of all music consumption.

On Aug. 30, *Billboard* will publish its R&B/Hip-Hop Power Players list showcasing the producers, creatives, executives and publishers who have made R&B/hip-hop the hottest genre on earth.

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THE GOSPEL OF BIG FREEDIA

Inspired by her evolving faith — and, more recently, an unexpected tragedy — the queen of New Orleans bounce is taking her music in a surprising new direction

BY JOE LYNCH

AT FIRST BLUSH, the mere idea of a Big Freedia gospel album sounds like musical Mad Libs. After all, Freedia is the queen of New Orleans bounce music, an ass-shaking, party-starting hip-hop dynamo; save for Sodom and Gomorrah, there's not a ton of booty popping in the Bible.

But like many LGBTQ+ Black artists raised in the American South, Freedia's musical awakening was far more parochial. "Growing up in the Black Baptist church here — in New Orleans especially — a lot of gay individuals are involved," the 47-year-old tells *Billboard* from her colorfully festooned New Orleans home, where she's hunkered down as a rainstorm approaches. "I started singing when I was a little kid. I was the choir director at my high school. I'm taking it back to my roots." She pauses for a half beat. "It's been on my heart heavy to do a gospel project. We're living in some crazy times."

After some 15 years as bounce music's standard-bearer — during which she starred in her own reality series (*Big Freedia: Queen of Bounce* on the cable channel Fuse from 2013 to 2017) and collaborated with artists from Beyoncé ("Formation") to Kesha ("Raising Hell") to Drake ("Nice for What") — Freedia set out to craft songs to liberate not merely the hips, but the spirit, too. She conceived her new project, *Pressing Onward*, to show the world "a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel."

Just 10 days after our conversation, Freedia's partner of two decades, Devon Hurst, died at the age of 38 of complications from diabetes. Now this album of songs about faith, resilience and hope for a better hereafter has taken on an even deeper personal meaning.

"Losing my partner, Devon, so suddenly changed everything," Freedia reflects. "This album started as a message of healing for the world — but now, it's me who's holding on to the music for strength. I'm pouring my heart into every beat, every word, and leaning on the love of my family, friends and fans to keep me moving forward. *Pressing Onward* means more than ever now."

Due Aug. 8, *Pressing Onward* is named after the New Orleans Baptist church Freedia was raised in. The 14 tracks include guest spots by Billy Porter ("Holy Shuffle") and Tamar Braxton ("Sunday's Best"), both of whom also grew up in the church, with Freedia's "handpicked" choir of local gospel singers, led by Josh Kagler, elevating each song. "Me and him sung when we were younger together," Freedia says with a wistful smile of Kagler. "We definitely go way back." In those days, Sundays meant a young Freddie Ross Jr. (Freedia's birth name) wearing suits, polished shoes and pressed slacks. "We'll be fresh," she says with a smile — though nowadays, Freedia doesn't need the excuse of the sabbath to gussy up: "I'm always fabulous whenever I step out."

> "Church is in the heart. You can have a relationship with your higher being and don't have to go to a building they call a church. The people make up the church, not the building."
>
> —BIG FREEDIA

Similarly, Freedia's concept of faith has evolved and expanded beyond church walls. That's central to *Pressing Onward*'s second track, "Church," and its defiant refrain: "We don't need a preacher to go to church… the love that we've been seeking is higher than the ceiling."

Given the fraught relationship between the LGBTQ+ community and most Christian denominations, the sentiment will likely resonate with many. "Church is in the heart," Freedia reasons. "You can have a relationship with your higher being and don't have to go to a building they call a church. The people make up the church, not the building."

On *Pressing Onward*, Freedia is creating her own religious experience of sorts — one that marries the powerful peaks and sonorous valleys of gospel with the irrepressible, relentless energy of bounce. A Big Freedia concert isn't so different from a Baptist service: Putting aside lyrical content and clothes (or lack thereof), both are centered on a charismatic figure whose call-and-response pushes an audience toward communal catharsis.

"It was a different headspace, definitely, but it was an easy switch for me," Freedia says of writing songs about faith and God. One may not expect that from a performer who spearheaded setting the Guinness World Record for "most people twerking simultaneously" (406 in New Orleans, 2014), but Freedia has remained passionate about Christian music throughout her life. "When I'm having a bad day or when I just want to lift my spirit, I listen to gospel music. And I'm always listening to gospel music when we're on the tour bus," she says, rattling off some of her favorite singers — Milton Brunson, Kirk Franklin, John P. Kee, Yolanda Adams, Shirley Caesar, Ricky Dillard — with a rapidity and ease that could convince any doubting Thomas that her love for the genre is genuine and deeply rooted.

This isn't the first time that gospel has helped Freedia cope with tragedy. In 2018, her brother, Adam Ross, was shot and killed in New Orleans at the age of 35. And as viewers of *Big Freedia: Queen of Bounce* know, her mother, Vera Ross, died in 2014; in the second season, Freedia led a second line funeral parade for her through the streets of the city. She knows her mother would have been "super proud" of her gospel pivot. "She's looking down and smiling down on me," Freedia says with an affirming nod. "She would have been overwhelmed and very excited for this project because she started me in the choir. Just to come back full circle… This, to me, feels like my best project yet."

It isn't, however, the only one she's working on. As chronicled in her current reality series, *Big Freedia Means Business* (also on Fuse), Freedia has been working to open a boutique hotel near the live music-heavy Frenchmen Street in NOLA, boasting "handpicked recipes from the queen herself" of soul food and local culinary classics. "It will be open next year sometime," she promises of the aptly named Hotel Freedia. "It's going to be a bang once it does open."

In the meantime, she's relying on music — her own and the gospel she's grown up with — to provide solace during this unexpectedly painful time in her personal life. "My music is my outlet to be able to express myself, to be able to express what I'm going through," Freedia says. "I'm always pressing forward. Through all the adversities I face, through all the life issues, I'm always pressing forward."

HUNTER HOLDER

SHAQ MILLI

Music agent, UTA

Networking is key in the music industry, and last year, Milli helped cultivate spaces for LGBTQ+ industry professionals to connect with one another. Through Proud, a UTA employee inclusion group, Milli and singer-songwriter Daniel LeClaire hosted Out @ Office, a mixer that celebrated "an evening of connectivity and inclusivity across entertainment." The litany of talent signed to UTA includes Cynthia Erivo, the Emmy-, Grammy- and Tony Award-winning lead of 2024's *Wicked* and its forthcoming *For Good* sequel. In 2024, Erivo reached No. 2 on the Billboard 200 with the *Wicked* soundtrack, alongside her Oscar-nominated co-star Ariana Grande. **LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT** "I've been proud to support the Los Angeles LGBT Center."

Along with writing for some of 2024's biggest artists like Taylor Swift and Kendrick Lamar, **JACK ANTONOFF** also saw his organization The Ally Coalition grow its touring efforts throughout the year.

GEOFF MORRISSEY

Senior director, Sailworks; director of operations and community outreach, The Ally Coalition

The Ally Coalition's touring efforts have grown significantly in the past year, says Morrissey, who notes that the organization founded by Jack Antonoff also secured partnerships and developed customized campaigns for musicians such as Bleachers, Lucy Dacus and Trixie Mattel, raising more than $500,000. Sailworks, which oversees TAC, also worked with Laufey in April to launch The Laufey Foundation, which Morrissey describes as focusing on "music education and ensuring that young musicians of all demographics have the opportunity to attend youth orchestra programs." **HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE** "At shows, in interviews and on socials, artists of all sizes — especially artists that are not LGBTQ — also need to be asking music fans to show up for LGBTQ youth."

LACHI MUSIC

Founder/CEO, RAMPD

Since starting RAMPD to support artists with disabilities, neurodivergence and chronic illness, Lachi has watched the industry's response to calls for improved accessibility shift. Lachi, who has hosted industrywide accessibility training sessions and partnered with major organizations like the Recording Academy, the Country Music Association Awards and Live Nation, says she is proud to help build new industry leaders who may not have been given the same opportunities otherwise. **LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT** "Queer Capita and PopOut LA are both excellent organizations supporting LGBTQ+ music professionals."

JUSTIN BUMPER REEVE

Senior vp of global sync, Virgin Music Group

The right synch can send a song into a whole new orbit — and few understand that better than Reeve, who helped the storied distributor land Tom Odell's "Black Friday" a placement in the third season of Netflix's buzzy coming-of-age LGBTQ+ romantic dramedy, *Heartstopper*. "[It] was simply the perfect emotional match for a gut-wrenching scene," Reeve says. "It's a powerful reminder of how the right song can elevate a moment and deepen its impact." Following *Heartstopper*'s season-three premiere, "Black Friday" reached a new peak of No. 35 on Hot Rock & Alternative Songs. **LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT** "GLAAD, The Trevor Project, Queer Capita."

MANUEL RODRIGUEZ SEIJAS

Senior digital music content manager, Amazon Music Spain

To ensure that queer artists are recognized and celebrated across all genres and platforms, Amazon Music Spain has made "significant strides" in integrating LGBTQ+ artists into popular playlists and programmed content. "We've been actively advocating for and implementing strategies to ensure LGBTQ+ artists are included in our broader programming, giving them the visibility and exposure they deserve," Rodriguez Seijas says. "We've seen this not just as a matter of inclusivity, but as a commitment to reflecting the rich diversity of musical talent that exists today." **LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT** "Sidaction in France, which is doing critical work in the fight against HIV/AIDS."

MILLI: COURTESY OF UTA. MORRISSEY: NICK PUCCI. MUSIC: COURTESY OF LACHI MUSIC. REEVE: JORDAN STRAUSS. RODRIGUEZ SEIJAS: COURTESY OF AMAZON. ANTONOFF: TAYLOR HILL/GETTY IMAGES.

TYRONE SCOTT

Director of business and legal affairs and artist services, SoundCloud

In April, SoundCloud launched a full suite of subscription services in Mexico, which Scott credits to "organic momentum ... along with outstanding cross-company collaboration." And while he's happy to have helped bring a bigger platform to "incredible talent and dynamic music emerging from Mexico," he's just as proud of the expansion on a personal level. "It's incredibly inspiring to experience the growing demand for diverse music on SoundCloud because representation is something I care deeply about," Scott says, "so it's encouraging to see it really resonate on the platform."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "There has to be constant intentionality to ensure that LGBTQ+ people are represented, treated fairly and have access to adequate support."

MICHAEL STICKA

President/CEO, Grammy Museum

Last year, the Grammy Museum set out to raise $5 million for its Campaign for Music Education. It blew past this goal "by almost $4 million," according to Sticka, allowing the museum "to offer free admission to all visitors 17 and under and to launch Sonic Playground, a permanent, interactive exhibit that transforms music-making into an immersive, hands-on experience." Sticka is "honored" that the Grammy Museum can "provide a stage for a wide range of backgrounds, cultures and creative voices." "We aim to help shape a future where this kind of support and visibility exists industrywide," he adds.

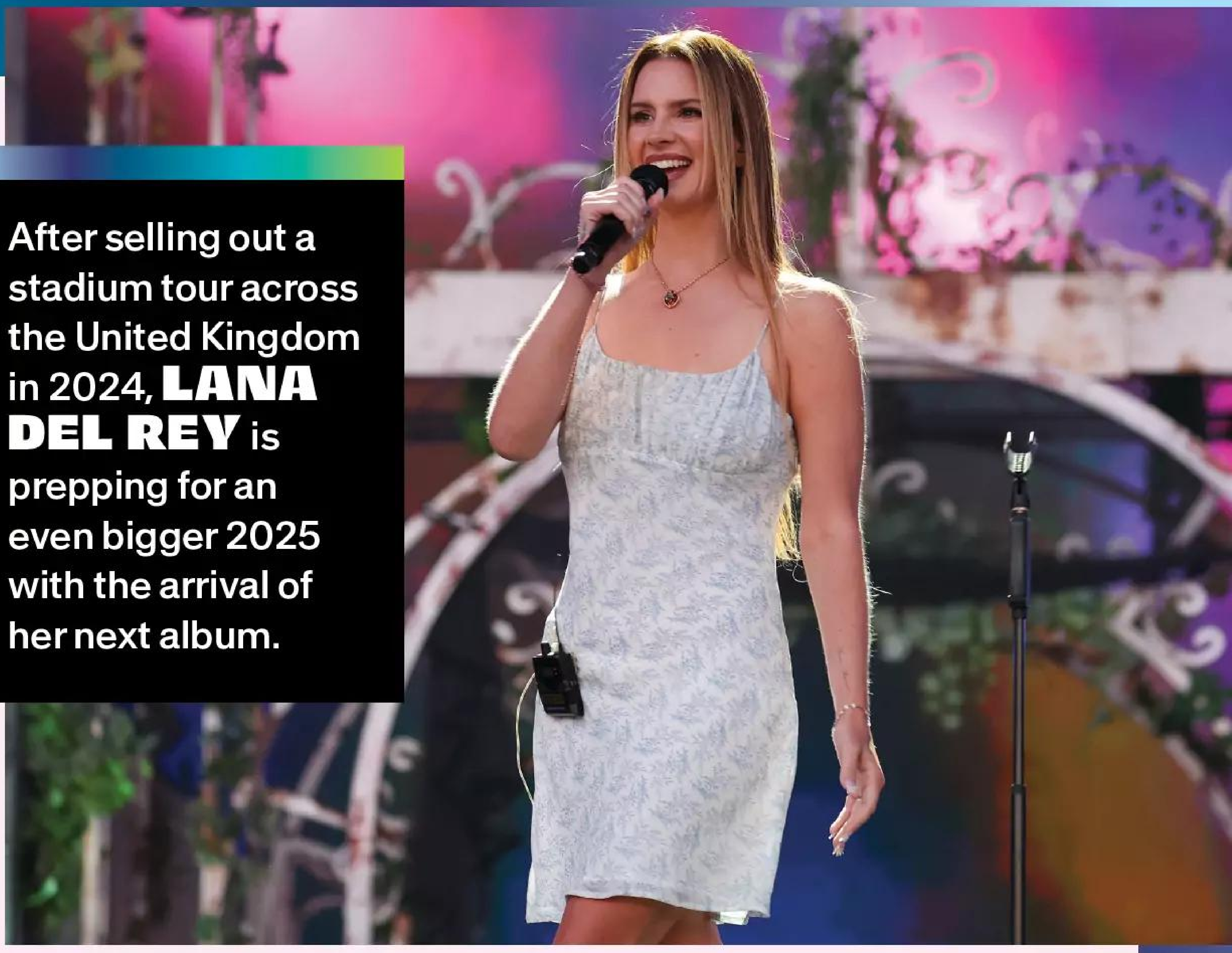
HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "The music industry must prioritize creating inclusive spaces where LGBTQ+ artists can express themselves freely and safely without compromise."

ERIN STRANGE

Manager/director of A&R, TaP Music

One of TaP's flagship acts, Lana Del Rey, has had a busy year on the road. Not only did she sell out a U.K. stadium tour that included back-to-back nights at London's iconic Wembley Stadium, but her headline-grabbing Stagecoach set "was just the beginning of what's to come this year," Strange says of Del Rey, who has a new album on the horizon. Ellie Goulding, who performed at Sphere with Anyma, and Dermot Kennedy, who launched his own Misneach Festival, have also recently made waves. Meanwhile, Strange says her "most exciting new artist" is Erin LeCount, whose self-produced *I Am Digital, I Am Divine* EP and connection with fans means she "truly embodies what it means to be a multidimensional artist."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "Mental health support and strong policies against hate. We also need to invest in long-term growth and leadership opportunities for queer talent at every level."



After selling out a stadium tour across the United Kingdom in 2024, **LANA DEL REY** is prepping for an even bigger 2025 with the arrival of her next album.

MAYRA VARGAS

Senior director of sync, Concord Music Publishing

In 2024, Vargas celebrated her fourth annual El Sync Camp, a Latin American songwriting camp for global synch opportunities that she co-founded. She was also elected to the Los Angeles chapter of the Association of Independent Music Publishers and kicked off 2025 with major synch placements in Super Bowl commercials by Budweiser, Uber Eats and Nerds. As a member of the LGBTQ+ community, Vargas also actively advocates for queer creatives day to day. "It's important to always question ourselves about our own practices," Vargas says, "and to always have an open door to create more and more visibility for queer creatives."

LGBTQ+ CHARITIES I SUPPORT "I'm constantly in awe of the work that The Dru Project and The Translatina Coalition do. They have all my love and support forever."

SHIRA YEVIN

Founder/CEO, Gritty in Pink

Twenty-one years after Yevin and her rock band Shiragirl crashed the Vans Warped Tour, leading to the creation of the Shiragirl stage to spotlight female-fronted bands, she's reteaming with the festival for its anticipated 2025 return. With headliners Royal & The Serpent, Sophie Powers, Sweet Pill and others, Gritty in Pink is launching the Gritty Warped Warmup Tour presented by MadHippie Beauty ("Our biggest partnership yet," Yevin says) and hosting a lounge at Warped. Additionally, Gritty in Pink — which helps women find jobs in the industry, gigs on the road and more — is expanding with lead investor Live Nation "into the ticketed-events space ... [It's] a whole new era for our company."

HOW THE INDUSTRY CAN SUPPORT LGBTQ+ PEOPLE "More events such as the PopOut LA conference, where we can gather as a community, share resources and celebrate each other."

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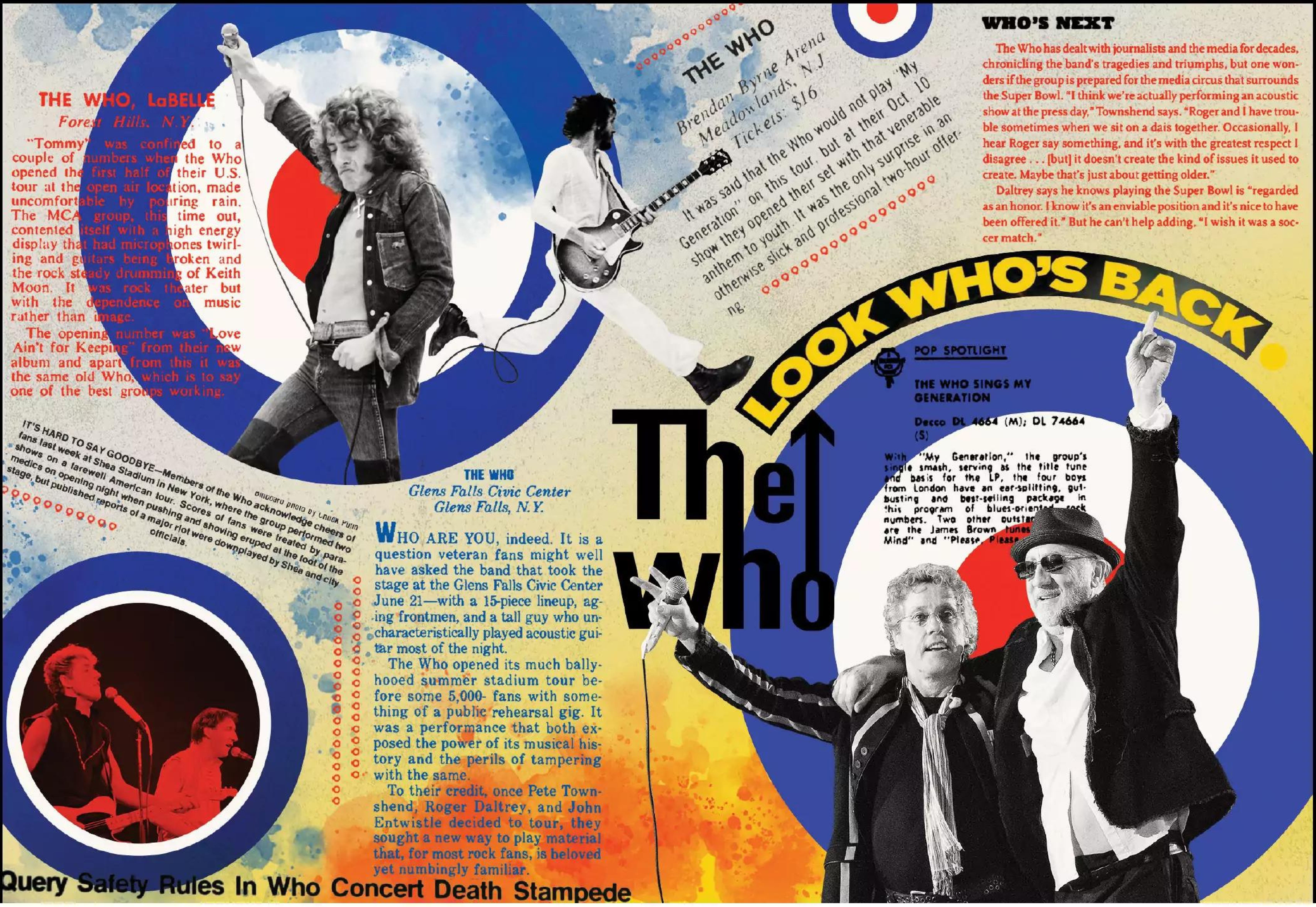
METHODOLOGY Nominations for all of *Billboard*'s industry-sourced executive lists open no less than 150 days in advance of publication, and a submission link is sent by request before the nomination period. (Please email thom.duffy@billboard.com for inclusion on the email list for nomination links and for how to obtain an editorial calendar.) *Billboard*'s 2025 Pride List honorees were nominated by their companies and peers and chosen by editors based on factors including information submitted with the nomination, recent newsworthy achievements and the market impact of an executive's work within the past 12 months as measured using data including the *Billboard* charts. We also considered achievements in making the music industry more LGBTQ+ inclusive. The market share of nominee companies was measured by *Billboard* charts, using data available as of June 3. Where required, U.S. record-label market share was consulted using Luminate's current market share for albums, plus track-equivalent and streaming-equivalent album consumption. Unless otherwise noted, Billboard Boxscore and Luminate are the sources for tour grosses and sales/streaming data, respectively. Luminate is also the source for radio audience metrics. The source for radio metrics is monitored station airplay from Mediabase provided by Luminate.

SCOTT: JOE CHEA. STICKA: BRADFORD ROGNE. STRANGE: LEE MALONE. VARGAS: DAVID RODRIGUEZ. YEVIN: SO FINCH. DEL REY: SIMONE JOYNER/GETTY IMAGES.


THE WHO
LOOK WHO'S BACK
The Who
Query Safety Rules In Who Concert Death Stampede

THE WHO, LaBELLE
Forest Hills, N.Y.

"Tommy" was confined to a couple of numbers when the Who opened the first half of their U.S. tour at the open air location, made uncomfortable by pouring rain. The MCA group, this time out, contented itself with a high energy display that had microphones twirling and guitars being broken and the rock steady drumming of Keith Moon. It was rock theater but with the dependence on music rather than image.

The opening number was "Love Ain't for Keeping" from their new album and apart from this it was the same old Who, which is to say one of the best groups working.

THE WHO
Brendan Byrne Arena
Meadowlands, N.J.
Tickets: $16

It was said that the Who would not play "My Generation" on this tour, but at their Oct. 10 show they opened their set with that venerable anthem to youth. It was the only surprise in an otherwise slick and professional two-hour offerng.

WHO'S NEXT

The Who has dealt with journalists and the media for decades, chronicling the band's tragedies and triumphs, but one wonders if the group is prepared for the media circus that surrounds the Super Bowl. "I think we're actually performing an acoustic show at the press day," Townshend says. "Roger and I have trouble sometimes when we sit on a dais together. Occasionally, I hear Roger say something, and it's with the greatest respect I disagree . . . [but] it doesn't create the kind of issues it used to create. Maybe that's just about getting older."

Daltrey says he knows playing the Super Bowl is "regarded as an honor. I know it's an enviable position and it's nice to have been offered it." But he can't help adding, "I wish it was a soccer match."

Billboard photo by Chuck Pulin

IT'S HARD TO SAY GOODBYE—Members of the Who acknowledge cheers of fans last week at Shea Stadium in New York, where the group performed two shows on a farewell American tour. Scores of fans were treated by paramedics on opening night when pushing and shoving erupted at the foot of the stage, but published reports of a major riot were downplayed by Shea and city officials.

THE WHO
Glens Falls Civic Center
Glens Falls, N.Y.

WHO ARE YOU, indeed. It is a question veteran fans might well have asked the band that took the stage at the Glens Falls Civic Center June 21—with a 15-piece lineup, aging frontmen, and a tall guy who uncharacteristically played acoustic guitar most of the night.

The Who opened its much ballyhooed summer stadium tour before some 5,000- fans with something of a public rehearsal gig. It was a performance that both exposed the power of its musical history and the perils of tampering with the same.

To their credit, once Pete Townshend, Roger Daltrey, and John Entwistle decided to tour, they sought a new way to play material that, for most rock fans, is beloved yet numbingly familiar.

POP SPOTLIGHT

THE WHO SINGS MY GENERATION

Decca DL 4664 (M); DL 74664 (S)

With "My Generation," the group's single smash, serving as the title tune and basis for the LP, the four boys from London have an ear-splitting, gut-busting and best-selling package in this program of blues-oriented rock numbers. Two other outstan are the James Brown tunes Mind" and "Please, Please

WHO'S LAST

When The Who first hit the United States, *Billboard* reported in its April 30, 1966, issue that "four boys from London have an ear-splitting, gut-busting" debut album. The band was infamously wild onstage during its initial run, which ended with a 1982 farewell tour, recorded for the *Who's Last* live album.

Forty-three years later, and 26 after the band reunited full time in 1999, the duo of Roger Daltrey and Pete Townshend is embarking on what it says is its final North American trek, The Song Is Over, which will begin Aug. 16 in Sunrise, Fla., near Miami. From the band's early stateside gigs to its 2010 Super Bowl halftime show performance, *Billboard* has tracked The Who's what, when, where and why.

WHO'S PAYING

According to an article in the April 8, 1967, issue, "The Who says they have come to the U.S. to familiarize the public with what they are contributing to contemporary music." Townshend quickly became familiar with the "far better" American concert grosses: "Most younger people in Europe can't pay $3 to $4 to see us," he said. In the Aug. 14, 1971, issue, *Billboard* hailed the group's "high energy display that had microphones twirling and guitars being broken" on the *Tommy* tour.

WHO'S TO BLAME?

"See Concert Changes After 11 Die" ran the top headline of the Dec. 15, 1979, *Billboard* after a crowd stampede claimed 11 lives at The Who's Dec. 3 Cincinnati show. The issue reported on the accident, as well as the ensuing investigation. "People are talking about blame on this," Frank Barsalona, president of the agency that booked the band at the time, told *Billboard*. "Has anyone asked the parents why the kids acted like they did?"

WHO'S DONE

"The Who's dissipated youth is behind it, which may be why this is the group's farewell tour," said the Oct. 30, 1982, *Billboard*. "Not that the Who put on a bad show. At this point, they would really have to work to do that." When the so-called last tour came, four years after drummer Keith Moon's death, the reviewer noted, "It was still sad to see the end. After all, they still have the stamina."

WHO'S BACK

When Townshend, Daltrey and John Entwistle played a series of reunion gigs in 1989, *Billboard*'s reviewer did not see sparks. "For listeners who sought rock'n'roll spontaneity, change and creativity — as the Who themselves once had — the concert was like tuning in to classic rock radio," according to the July 8, 1989, issue. "It was a performance that both exposed the power of its musical history and the perils of tampering with the same."

WHO'S ON TV

Billboard featured The Who on the cover of its Feb. 6, 2010, issue, tied to the band's Super Bowl performance. "I've felt a bit peeved that everybody's talking about the Super Bowl and not talking about the Who's next show, so for once we get the benefit of both," Townshend told *Billboard*. Still, he had one tiny gripe: "I wish it was a soccer match." When the Feb. 20 issue reported a 102% sales bump for the band's *Greatest Hits*, though, no one was complaining. —JOE LYNCH

ILLUSTRATION BY BARBARA GIBSON

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